

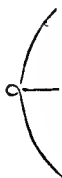
A SUMMER  
IN TOURAINE

FREDERIC LEES

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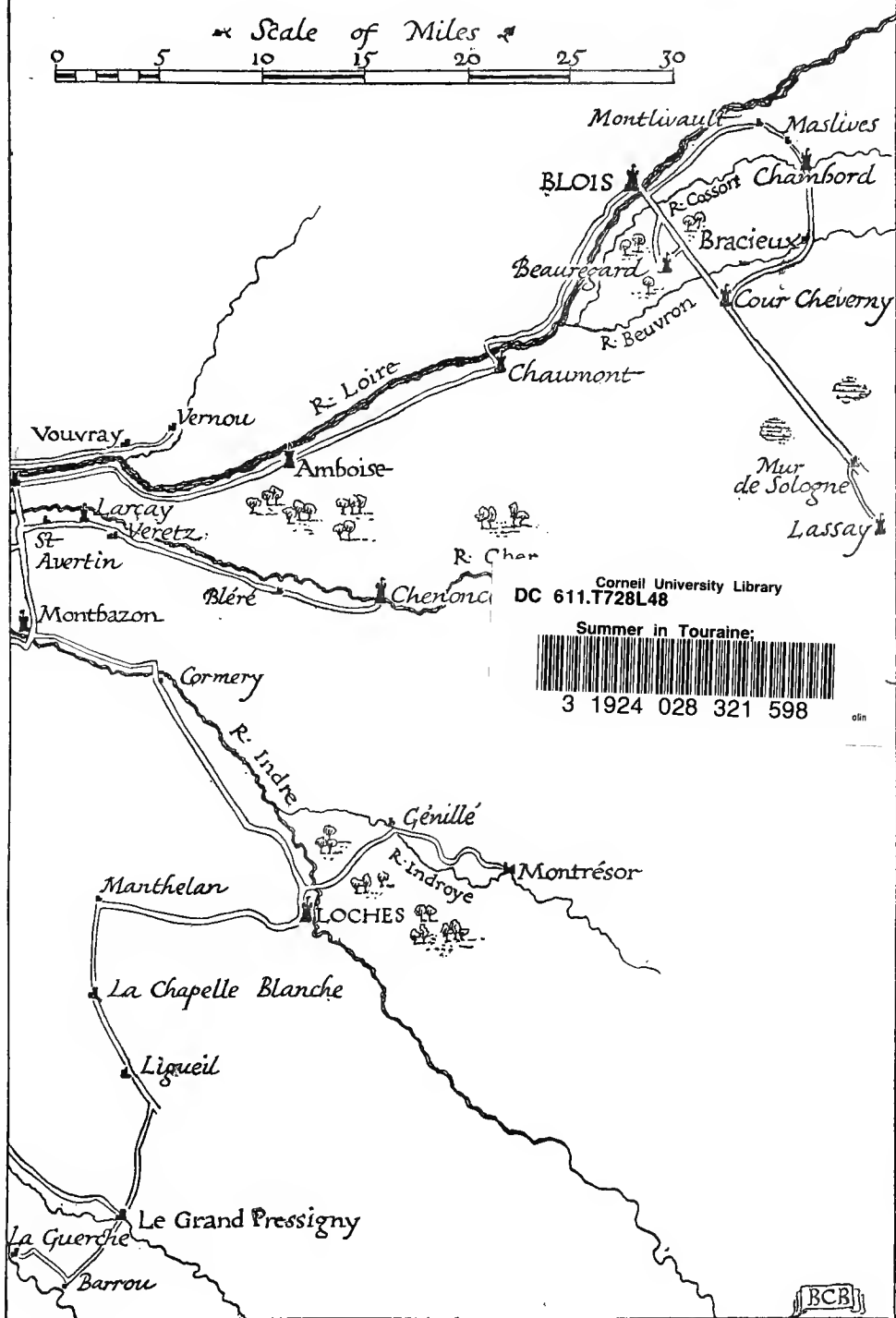
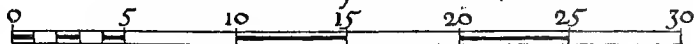
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A MAP SHEWING  
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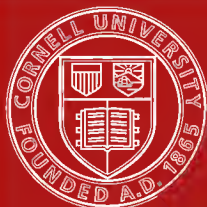
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# **A SUMMER IN TOURAINÉ**



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THE CHÂTEAU OF LUYNES







# A SUMMER IN TOURAINÉ

BY  
FREDERIC LEES

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY  
MAXWELL ARMFIELD  
EIGHTY-SEVEN OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

“LA TERRA MOLLE E LIETA E DILETTOSA  
SIMILI A SE GLI ABITATOR PRODUCE.”

TASSO



CHICAGO  
A. C. McCLURG & CO.  
LONDON: METHUEN & CO.  
1909

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## DEDICATION

MY DEAR FELLOW-TRAVELLER,—On looking back to the countless occasions on which you have given me fruitful advice, I begin to realise that my indebtedness to you is fast growing beyond computation. Service ought by rights to be repaid by service, but I have long since abandoned all hope of ever being able to acquit my obligations in that way. Gratitude is now the only coin at my disposal, so let me acknowledge my years-old debt and the fresh increment which has been added to it in the shape of this record of our delightful summer in Touraine. This book is, indeed, as much yours as mine, since it would probably never have been written but for your suggestion and encouragement. I can imagine a familiar look of denegation appearing in your brown eyes as you read this ; but it was ever your habit to forget and

deny your good offices. Surely you recollect a certain summer-day colloquy of ours on the subject of the preparations necessary for such a journey as we had undertaken, and your remarks on the tenfold enjoyment to be got out of travel when the mind was well-stored with information about the places to be visited? "If travellers would only give as much thought to their intellectual equipment as to the contents of their trunks and portmanteaus," you said, amongst other things, "they would find that these beautiful châteaux are something more than mere conglomerations of stone and mortar. Studied in connection with the times through which they have passed, they become living entities, as fascinating as great human personalities, and every bit as entrancing as works of fiction." Whilst fully agreeing with all that you said, I ventured to point out that the ordinary traveller was a person with limited time, and that, whereas trunks and portmanteaus might be got ready in a day, his intellectual baggage could not be buckled up before the lapse of at least five to six weeks. My own

experience in that matter had taught me a lesson. Prior to setting out on our tour, I had searched in vain for a book, either in English or in French, which would give me the facts that I thought were necessary for the proper understanding of the châteaux of the Loire. In the great library where I usually browse, I found, it is true, many books on Touraine, but, though some had excellent points, all, to my mind, were defective. Some were incomplete, inasmuch as many important châteaux were not even mentioned; others were out of date or inaccurate; and others, again, were either too technical or too diffuse. So I had to obtain the architectural, historical, and topographical information I needed from a multitude of sources: unwieldy art folios, archæological dictionaries, forgotten pamphlets, ancient manuscripts, and the musty memoirs of historical societies. How many travellers, I asked, have the leisure to undertake so long and exacting a work as this? "Few indeed," you replied, "though most tourists, without an excessive amount of research, might do

a little in the way of supplementing the meagre descriptions of their guide-books." And then, after a pause, you added thoughtfully : "But why don't you save them the trouble, and by writing an account of our journey pack their 'intellectual baggage' with all that it ought to contain?" Well, your idea, you see, has borne fruit ; and I sincerely trust that the manner in which it has fructified will be at once agreeable to yourself and useful to those who propose to follow the route we took in the Indre-et-Loire and adjoining departments.

On looking at the map you will observe that our sojourn, though it was initially intended to be a summer in Touraine, eventually developed into a visit to several of the ancient provinces of France. We were out of Touraine when we started to see the châteaux of the Loire, and at the end of our wanderings we were again some distance from its borders. But that must necessarily be the case with all who set out to visit those splendid old buildings. The name Touraine has now become a very elastic



one, and is rarely used by the tourist in its strictly geographical sense ; it is to him merely a convenient name for a certain indefinite part of central France celebrated for its historical houses and its natural beauties.

And this leads me to ask you, now that you have seen everything that the ancient province has to show, if you do not consider, with me, that it is justly celebrated? Or do you think, with Stendhal, that “la belle Touraine n'existe pas”? The author of *Le Rouge et le Noir* must have been in a particularly paradoxical mood when, recollecting the grandiose landscapes of his beloved Italy, he wrote that phrase in his amusing *Mémoires d'un Touriste*. However that may be, his words of disparagement, which we must not forget appear in one of the numerous works on which Henri Beyle's reputation is in no way based, have never done any real harm. Beautiful Touraine has continued to be every whit as popular as it was seventy to eighty years ago, at which time, according to Balzac, we English began to appreciate

its qualities and descended upon it "like a cloud of grasshoppers." Moreover, as far as you and I are concerned, I think I may say that our admiration for it is not likely to abate, even though our eyes may in the future behold greater beauties. And let me add, in conclusion, that I hope the day is not far distant when you will once more be able to take to the road in company with yours affectionately,

F. L.

PARIS, *September* 1908

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A MAP SHOWING THE CASTLES OF TOURAINE . . . . .	<i>Front Cover</i>



# A SUMMER IN TOURAINE

## CHAPTER I

### THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE AND TWO OF ITS PALACES

IT must have been the recollection of passages in the chronicles and memoirs of certain French writers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that prompted us to choose Blois as the starting-point of our wanderings on the banks of the Loire. For, as we proceeded towards our destination,—at times along roads shaded by long lines of poplars, at others alongside the river, with vineyards, golden-yellow cornfields, and stretches of waving feathery-topped asparagus ever in view,—we found ourselves travelling in company with Jean d'Auton, Jean Marot, Brantôme, and other ancient writers, and, out of fragments of their rugged yet often picturesque prose, forming an alluring picture of the days when that quiet provincial town

was one of the most important centres in France.

These pleasant old writers—may you never have less agreeable fellow-travellers, or less perspicacious inspirers!—depicted Blois at the height of its fame as a royal town, with the rulers of France and a brilliant retinue in their magnificent château on the hill above the Loire. They introduced us to the daily life of the court, which was still mediæval in its taste for physical exercises,—a life largely made up of duels and wrestling-matches, jousts and tournaments, hunting and hawking excursions, and games of tennis. With companies of splendidly accoutred noblemen and archers, they took us along the roads leading to the Château of Blois to bid welcome to foreign princes and ambassadors, who, as they entered the courtyard of the palace, were received with flourishes of trumpets and clarions, and the joyous beating of tabors; and whose reception by the king and queen, surrounded by the noblest lords, ladies, and damsels of France, was the occasion for grand and imposing ceremonies. They obtained entrance for us to councils of state, and enabled us to be present at the signing of laws and treaties; and, above all, they passed

before our eyes a series of portraits of men and women who exercised a preponderant influence on the manners, customs, and thought of their age.

First came Louis XII and his consort Anne of Brittany: the former a tall, thin man, sober and avaricious, but kindly in manner and endowed with a love of fine houses and beautiful tapestries; the latter "an honourable and virtuous queen, full of wisdom, a true mother of the poor, an aid to noblemen, a protector of ladies, damsels, and girls of gentle birth, and a patron of learned men." Both, we learnt, held art and literature in honour, but Anne, unlike her utilitarian husband, loved letters for their own sake, and put him far into the shade. A gradual, broad, and subtle movement known as the Renaissance was then showing early signs of its presence in France,—that humanistic movement which Michelet well called "the discovery by man of himself and of the world,"—and her court of noble ladies and poets helped in no small measure to enlarge man's intellectual outlook and to prepare the ground for that definite loosening of his bonds which was to be the glory of the reign of Francis I. For with the cultured Francis and

his gentle Queen Claude, who, to give Brantôme's own words, "was very good and very charitable, most kind to every one, and who never gave displeasure or did ill to any person either of her court or kingdom," the Renaissance came in all its brilliance. The civilisation of the Middle Ages was passing away, and giving place not only to fresh manners and customs but also to new ideals; literature, which had been despised under Louis XI and even declared to be detrimental to those following the career of arms, was regarded by soldier and civilian alike as of primary importance; and the free development of the intellect generally, as set forth in Baldassare Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, which Francis' secretary, Jacques Colin, had translated from the Italian, became the one aim of the illustrious women and prelates, nobles and wealthy commoners, literary men and artists of many nationalities, who had gathered around the king in the palace which we were rapidly approaching. And as, at last, we came within sight of that superb Château of Blois, there vividly rose before us the unforgettable figures of two of that brilliant company: the graceful poet Clément Marot and the marvellously accomplished Margaret



of Angoulême, Queen of Navarre,—the two great products of the Renaissance, and the latter its very incarnation.

If on no other ground than that the Château of Blois was the scene of this epoch-making movement, you would do well, on undertaking a journey among the châteaux of the Loire, to follow our example and go there at the outset. But, apart from the fact that, on entering its courtyard, you will feel you are stepping into the atmosphere of the Renaissance, there is a special reason in your case for visiting it before any other of the châteaux of that part of France. You are bent on seeing fine buildings, and at Blois and in the surrounding country there are four of the finest to be seen anywhere,—four masterpieces of architecture, which were built (and I believe the case is unprecedented) within less than fifty years, comprising the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. These, naming them in the order of their construction, are: a portion of the Château of Amboise, the wing of the Château of Blois built under Louis XII, that due to Francis I and Claude of France, and the Château of Chambord. The accomplishment of so much in so short a time proves that Blois was the

centre of an important colony of architects ; and it is there, undoubtedly, that it is most profitable to begin to study their handiwork.

But before giving a detailed account of our visit to Blois, let me seize the opportunity presented by the mention of these consummate artists of drawing attention to two points connected with them and their work : first, the question of their nationality, and, secondly, that of their indebtedness to the Italian Renaissance. The four masterpieces I have just mentioned were for a long time attributed to Italian architects, but the records now make it perfectly clear that they were planned and built by Frenchmen. Documentary evidence apart, however, a critical comparison between French châteaux and Italian palaces of the Renaissance shows that they could not be the work of men of the same nationality. Differing in almost every particular, the former are distinguished from the latter by numerous architectural details of purely French origin,—a clear indication not only that they were not built by Italians, but also that France owes much less to Italy than has been hitherto claimed. Indeed, strictly speaking, it is not quite correct to apply the word Renaissance to the transformation which French archi-

itecture underwent in the days of Louis XII and Francis I. For, unlike Italy, France had by no means been in a dormant condition since the fall of the Roman Empire. The art of architecture, it is true, was in a state of stagnation, owing to a too slavish respect on the part of her architects for the threadbare style of the Middle Ages ; but there had been no break in that art, which only required to be brought into touch with newer ideas to develop and flourish anew. The Italian campaigns of Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Francis I supplied this much-needed inspiration, and the result was a new form of architecture, composed of a union between some of the traditions of the mediæval art of France and the artistic principles underlying the Italian Renaissance. But, though what is known as the French Renaissance and the Italian movement bearing the same name sprang from a common source, it should not be forgotten that they proceeded along different lines, and that the fruits of the former were so vastly dissimilar to those of the latter, that French art as exemplified in these royal residences of the sixteenth century may justly be regarded as essentially national in its character.

It is, then, the growth and final blossoming of this art that makes the Château of Blois so well worth a visit. Its claims upon your interest, however, are not wholly confined, as we soon discovered on arriving there, to the period of the Renaissance. Almost as far back as one can go in history, strongholds stood on the site of the present château, and portions of these older structures (some of which I shall later have occasion to mention) remain even to-day. The existing buildings were, in all probability, preceded, first by a Roman fortress, and then, towards the middle of the tenth century, by a castle and residence, built to the order of Theobald the Trickster. During the next four centuries, various occupants added to this feudal residence. But they do not appear to have made it of any great artistic worth, although Froissart, writing about 1388, described it as "fine, large, strong, and luxurious,—one of the most beautiful castles in the kingdom of France." This usually accurate and impartial chronicler was chaplain to Guy II, Count of Blois, and he lived in the château; so it is not unlikely that a desire to please his protector led him, for once, into an exaggeration. At any rate, we find no such high praise in Antoine

Astesan's account of a journey which he made through France some sixty years later ; for he speaks of it merely as " a château so strong and so large that it can accommodate several thousand men and horses."

Be content, therefore, to picture this earlier Château of Blois less for the sake of its plain, substantial walls than for that of the men who found protection behind them. Personally, I never think of it without summoning up at least two of those figures of the Middle Ages,—the poets Charles of Orleans and François Villon. Charles, as the successor of Louis of Orleans, Count of Blois, was its occupant from the end of the fourteenth century until 1415, the year of Agincourt, where he was taken prisoner ; and, after twenty-five years' captivity in England, he once more made it his home, to surround himself with a small court of literary noblemen and poets, to compose his polished ballads and roundelays, and to live that comfortable, lazy life which so well suited his epicurean tastes and habits. As to Villon,—Villon, the thief and assassin, yet, withal, the greatest poet and most fascinating character of his age,—the obscurity with which so many periods of his strange life are enveloped, makes it impossible to say at exactly what time and

for how long he was at Blois. But that he really did belong to Charles' literary court, and received from his brother poet both payment and protection, is evident from his poems. Was he there on December 19, 1457, on the occasion of the birth of Charles' daughter, Mary? And did he there and then write the congratulatory poem *Le Dit de la naissance Marie*, which was found carefully preserved in a manuscript of Charles' own works? Let me confess to a fondness for accepting these conjectures as realities, and at the same time to an inclination for imagining that the relationship between the light-hearted Charles and the bohemian "Maistre" François was unbroken until as late as 1465. For that was the year in which the Count of Blois died, leaving his estates to a child of two, the future Louis XII, who, thirty-three years later, on the death of Charles VIII, was to inaugurate a complete transformation of the home of his ancestors.

Louis, impelled by a deep affection for his birthplace,—"*où il avait été nourri tout son jeune âge*,"—began by building the eastern wing of the present château, and the Chapel of Saint Calais on the south; Francis I and Claude of France continued his work by adding the

northern side ; and François Mansart, in 1635, replaced the wing erected by Louis' father on the west by one which he built for Gaston of Orleans. Thus, the Château de Blois of to-day is in the form of an irregular quadrilateral. And it covers about half of the triangular plateau, protected on all sides, which was occupied by earlier buildings.

Seen under favourable conditions of light (it was a perfect summer afternoon when we visited Blois), it would be difficult to imagine anything more delightful than the exterior façade of the eastern wing. Facing the little square by way of which the château is approached,—a square which was formerly an outer court,—it pleases for a variety of reasons, but principally because of the exquisite harmony of its colouring, the richness of its decoration, and the stateliness of its lines. After the fashion of Renaissance days, a judicious use has been made of red and black bricks, which have the double effect of being highly decorative and of throwing into relief the white stone windows, the cornice, and the balustrade. How admirably, too, the magnificent skylights, with their graceful pinnacles and profusion of ornamentation, stand out against the purple, high-pitched roof, which

might have been in just the slightest degree monotonous but for the smaller wooden skylights and the well-proportioned brick chimneys ! The groundwork of the general decoration is composed of innumerable fleurs-de-lis, the porcupine and festooned rope which formed the respective devices of Louis and Anne of Brittany, and their initials ;—the last named being particularly noteworthy, since such embellishments were unknown before the end of the fifteenth century. Thus does the eye wander from one beautiful detail to another, until, at last, it centres in its greatest delight : a richly ornamented niche above the entrance, and, beneath its splendid canopy, an equestrian statue of the King. This statue, by the bye, is the only part of the exterior of the eastern wing which does not date from the sixteenth century ; it is the work of Emile Seurre, a sculptor in whom Félix Duban, the restorer of the château, found an exceptionally able collaborator. Indeed, judging by an old drawing of the statue which preceded it, and which was destroyed at the time of the Revolution, it is even an improvement on the original work. Considered as a whole, and purely from the point of view of style, the general composition of this charming façade





BLOIS: ENTRANCE TO THE CASTLE.



THE CHATEAU OF BLOIS: EASTERN WING AND CHAPEL OF ST. CALAIS

is, of course, Gothic ; but it is Gothic architecture with the stamp of a period of transition upon it ; a style of architecture into which there already entered something of the feeling of the Renaissance.

The façade facing the courtyard, which is reached through a little door surmounted by a porcupine, is similar in ornamentation to the exterior front, only less luxuriant. It possesses an arcade, with alternately round and square pillars ; and its two extremities are flanked by towers, containing finely ornamented staircases, which lead to the former royal apartments. These are now used by the town of Blois as a museum and picture-gallery. And I may say, incidentally, that the pictures are well worth seeing, especially the historical portraits of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, including at least one by François Clouet, who, since he was a native of Touraine, deserves special notice. In these rooms, too, are several highly coloured and gilded chimney-pieces, almost wholly the work of Duban, the originals having been so terribly injured during the reign of Louis XVIII that little remained as a guide to restoration. The finest is that in the room in which Anne of Brittany died in 1514. From

the already mentioned arcade access is gained to the most important of the few remaining parts of the older château,—the vast Salle des Etats, so called because it was there that the States-General, which had such an influence over the destinies of France at the time of the wars of religion, met in 1576 and 1588. It dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and is composed of two sections separated by a row of eight painted columns. "A rather poor building" was Viollet-le-Duc's description of it, and there can, indeed, be no doubt that its present bare and altered state gives but a faint idea of the splendour of the original hall.

On the south side of the courtyard is somewhat similar arcade to that of the eastern wing, with a smaller fifteenth century building above it, and, adjoining, the Chapel of Saint Calais. This chapel with elegant slate spire is said to have been the jewel of the building constructed by Louis, but its present state tells so clear a tale of decadence that one cannot fail to be disappointed with it. Apart from the decay caused by time and neglect, it suffered deliberate injury at the hands of Gaston of Orleans, in such sort that no amount of restoration, were it ever so conscientious or

so gorgeously carried out, could make up for its losses.

After passing Louis' buildings in review, two very natural questions occur to us : Who was the architect ? And when did he begin his work ? A certain Colin Byard has been mentioned as having drawn up the plans, but, on looking into the matter, you will find that his claims to the honour are so slight that he cannot seriously be regarded as their author. Should you extend your researches to ancient documents, the result is the same,—failure to discover the smallest particle of conclusive evidence in favour of any one ; so you have, perforce, to give up the quest and confess, like others, that the name of Louis' architect is unknown. On the other hand, the records, incomplete though they are, reveal the names and positions of men who saw his plans faithfully carried out. François de Pontbriant, the member of a family which had long been attached to the Dukes of Orleans, and who had been in charge of the Château of Amboise, was clerk of the works ; Simon Guischart was foreman ; and Jacques Sourdeau, a native of Loches, was master-mason. The last-named workman probably played a much more important rôle than appears on the surface, his

humble title of *maître-maçon*, which has not the slightest analogy with the present signification of the word, being quite sufficient to identify him, theoretically and practically, as a master of the art of building. As to the date on which he and his companions began to execute the architect's orders, it has been given as 1498. Here, again, however, there is a doubt. In that year, Louis was probably far too much occupied with his divorce from Jeanne of France and his projected marriage with Anne of Brittany,—not to mention ordinary affairs of state,—to have either the time or the inclination to think about the building of his palace. So perhaps the following year is a more likely date for the laying of the foundations of the eastern wing, which was approaching completion in 1503.

The continuation of Louis' project to build an entirely new château was due, in a great measure, to his daughter, Claude;—a fact worthy of special note, since the credit for her initiative is as richly deserved as the time it has been withheld from her is long. Gentle and retiring in nature as she was, she has been overshadowed in history by her dashing husband, whose share of glory has been quite out of proportion to the part he took in the

construction of a building which is unrivalled in the whole of France. Both before the work was begun and whilst it was in progress, her taste and judgment undoubtedly largely came into play ; and if every one had his or her rights, it would be her name, and not that of Francis, which would be given to the northern wing of the Château of Blois.

As, on the day of our arrival, we came along the stony streets of Blois and emerged on to the Place Victor Hugo, the sight of the exterior front of this wing was our first introduction to the château. Coming upon it with fresh and eager minds, it produced a particularly vivid and lasting impression ; and we can still distinctly see it rising above the little town—with almost a personal air of majesty—from its verdure-covered base. Resplendent in the sunlight, frankly acknowledging the inspiration received from a rejuvenated Italy, and radiating the warm feeling of the unfettered art of the sixteenth century, it joyously springs aloft on portions of the old feudal castle : a masterpiece in a new style built on thirteenth century foundations, and thus a symbol, as it were, of the triumph of humanism over the dark ages preceding the Renaissance. Its dominating feature is a

double row of painted and gilded *loggie* extending nearly the whole of its length. Their effect is delightful. By opening the façade to the light and the air, they give it a certain human touch which would have been largely, if not wholly lacking had they been replaced by windows. For these *loggie* were meant for use on sunny days, especially the lower series with their charming little balconies, which want nothing to make them complete save the figures of Francis, Queen Claude, and their courtiers. Above the upper tier is a fine row of grotesque gargoyles,—no two alike; and then, immediately under a broad, low-pitched roof, partly supported by round columns, a balcony stretching from one end of the wing to the other, and commanding a splendid view over the town and surrounding country. A profusion of sculptured detail, the decoration pleases no less than the general architecture of the façade. One device—that found on all buildings erected by Francis—predominates: a salamander surmounted by a crown. Such is the exterior front of this northern wing. Yet, after describing it, we have a feeling that by no means everything has been said. However minute our description may be, we have to confess that there



is something intangible about this fascinating front, some subtle spirit that emanates from things of beauty, which escapes analysis.

But, whatever might be said in praise of the beauty of this façade, how much more applicable it would be to the one on the right of the courtyard ! For the interior front, consisting of three floors, has never been surpassed, either in originality of design or in richness and ingenuity of ornamentation. Other pieces of architecture of the same period so pale in comparison that, until you have seen this example, you can form but a faint idea of what the sixteenth century was capable of producing. Where, indeed, do you find anything so perfect as its admirably proportioned windows, with their carved mullions and transoms ; its delicate stone embroidery ; its pilasters with exquisitely sculptured capitals ; its balustrade formed of the initials of Francis and Claude, interwoven with crowns, and surrounded by the festooned rope ; or its skylights adorned with the loveliest of pinnacles ? And yet, beautiful as these are individually and as a whole, they are merely the setting for a jewel of greater price. A little to the left of the middle of the façade there stands out the celebrated staircase of the Château of

Blois,—that staircase which has been well named the final word of the art of the Renaissance. It can best be described by calling it a sort of cylinder placed on end against the building,—a cylinder with interstices from base to summit which leave the winding, easily mounted steps open to the air,—a cylinder as finely chiselled in parts as many a precious example of the cabinet-maker's art. The unknown sculptors whom the architect of the northern wing engaged to carry out this work of ornamentation—(he, too, by the bye, is unknown,<sup>1</sup> though some think that Queen Claude's choice fell upon Charles Viart, who, in 1515, built the greater part of the Orleans and Beaugency town-halls)—those artists, whose handiwork has been more durable than their names and biographies, have covered the lower portion of the staircase with the most varied, intricate, and beautiful designs imaginable. The pilasters, which are decorated at their base with clear-cut medallions, are one mass of delicate arabesques. Under the porch and within the sunk panels beneath

<sup>1</sup> The records, however, are clear as to his collaborators. They were the same men who worked for Louis XII—François de Pontbriant, Simon Guischart, and Jacques Sourdeau; and they held identically the same positions.



STAIRCASE IN THE COURTYARD AT BLOIS



the first balustrade is a similar ornamentation, and there, in addition, are more of the now familiar salamanders, and the crowned initials of the King and Queen. But the chief beauty of these pilasters resides in the adorable statues of women resting on projecting pedestals, and beneath shrine-like canopies, between the first and second balustrade, where the architect has placed them so skilfully that every attribute of their beauty is seen to advantage. These, we were told by the guide whom the municipality of Blois imposes on visitors, are by Jean Goujon. But that, of course, is an error, since the interior façade of the northern wing was built between 1515 and 1519; and the earliest works of the great sculptor date from much later—1540. However, though we could not sanction the attribution, we could, at any rate, accept it as a tribute to the high artistic quality of these statues, which are not unworthy even of an artist of his reputation. Above the second balustrade, beneath which, as I have already said, they stand, runs a third, with the same gentle obliquity. Both are ornamented in identically the same manner, each section between the pilasters being decorated with an F interlaced with a crown and flanked by salamanders. In this they differ

from the lower balustrade, which has balusters of a more ordinary form, but each a piece of delicate sculpture. Thus do bold chiselling and minute arabesque meet the eye almost wherever it alights ; and so I might continue to describe them if I had any hope of doing justice to this unique staircase. Many have described it before me, but no one has yet succeeded in giving an adequate idea of its incomparable richness. As with all masterpieces, it must be seen with your own eyes if you would fully appreciate its beauties.

Once we had ascended this staircase, but not without lingering a little over the lace-work of sculpture with which parts of its inner walls are covered,—once we had entered the interior of the northern wing, our vision of a golden age of art, evoked by contemplating the fruit of one of its happiest moods, gradually faded away. Before wholly vanishing, however, it was more than once, as we went from room to room, momentarily quickened into fresh vividness by a few remaining traces of Francis and Claude : here an initialed mantelpiece, gorgeous with blue and gold ; there a doorway embellished with characteristic sixteenth century cupids, birds, and flowers in low-relief ; and here,

again, a room panelled with exquisitely carved wood. Of the ancient splendours of those former royal apartments, these are all that are left, and, alas ! they were insufficient to keep the times of the man and woman who inspired them before our mental eye. Moreover, little indeed as those rooms lend themselves to musing, so chilling to the imagination is their bare unfurnished state, so much at variance with one's æsthetic sense is the crude brilliancy with which a too conscientious restorer has coloured their walls, we found them too crowded with memories of Francis' successors to permit us to form an effective picture of the heyday of humanism. They recalled the brief reign of Henry II when the strife between Catholic and Huguenot was making its first appearance ; they recalled the Regency of Catherine de' Medici, darkened by the wars of religion and St. Bartholomew's day ; and, above all, they recalled the sinister days of the weak and treacherous Henry III, whose dramatic conflict with the Duke of Guise over the question of a successor to the throne ended in assassination. Their very nomenclature is proof of how imperatively they recall these three rulers. The rooms on the second storey, consisting of a *salle des fêtes*

and a guardroom, which occupy the portion of the wing facing the courtyard, are named the apartments of Henry II. On the side overlooking the Place Victor Hugo are Catherine de' Medici's drawing-room, the bedroom in which she died early in 1589, an oratory, a study, and two other smaller rooms. This study is the one whose wood panelling dates from the reign of Francis; it contains no fewer than two hundred and thirty-seven panels, all differently carved; and behind some of them are skilfully concealed hiding-places. The ceiling and mantelpiece are the work of Duban, who, instead of executing them in keeping with the pure Renaissance style of the rest of the room, was inspired by woodwork at the Château of Beauregard, dating from the period of Henry III. After each of these works of art had been pointed out, the guide invited us to look from the windows on to the square, and told her oft-repeated tale of the escape, in 1619, of Marie de' Medici, who was exiled to Blois by her son at the instigation of the Duke of Luynes. Our fellow-visitors, gazing into the depths below, received the narration of this remarkable example of feminine intrepidity with many exclamations of surprise, which would



have been fully justified if only the story had been correct. But, as a fact, Mary and her rope-ladder never dangled from those northern windows. She effected her escape by means of ladders on the southern side, and did it with comparative ease, since in her day there existed no such high parapets as those which now surround the château on three of its sides. Our cicerone's error was, however, excusable on the score of this minor detail of history having been inaccurately recorded even by serious historians, and to do her justice it must be said that her account of the dramatic incidents which occurred in the rooms on the third storey was, on the whole, more in accordance with historical truth. These rooms are called the apartments of Henry III, and their distribution is almost identical with that of the lower floor; two guardrooms look on to the courtyard, and on the opposite side of the building are the King's drawing-room, his bedroom, and a dressing-room. Our interest, naturally, was centred almost entirely on the bedroom, for it was there that the final scene in the murder of the Duke of Guise was enacted at the close of the year 1588. For some time before the crime was committed Henry had decided

to kill the Duke, whose existence as leader of the Catholic party which was trying to force the King to choose another successor to the throne than the rightful one—Henry of Bourbon, King of Navarre, the head of the Huguenots—was a constant menace to his crown and his own life. The day fixed for the murder was December 23. At four o'clock in the morning the King had forty-five of his most faithful courtiers stationed in a private staircase to lie in wait for the victim. On arriving at the council meeting, which Guise attended every morning at eight o'clock, the King's secretary informed the Duke that his master wished to speak to him in his room ; and it was whilst on his way there by a necessarily circuitous route—Henry having had a doorway walled up—that he was attacked and, after a terrible struggle, stabbed to death. Assisted by a recollection of the narratives of Miron and other chroniclers, we pictured the scene—the Duke's suspicion, on hearing footsteps behind him, that he had been led into a trap, his cry of "Mercy on me !" as he received the first dagger-thrust, his bare-handed fight against the forty-five armed men, his slowly declining resistance as he lost blood from his wounds,

his death at the very foot of the King's bedstead, and the figure of Henry with his ear against the door anxiously listening to the sounds of the struggle. How grimly tragic is that last incident!—verily as tragic as the picture which Walter Savage Landor draws for us in his imaginary conversation between the Empress Catherine and Princess Dashkof, who listened to the murder of the Emperor of Russia from an adjoining room. When the heavy thud of the Duke's body came to the King's ears he slowly opened the door, and, thrusting his pale face into the room, took in at a glance the scene of the murder. The body of the Duke of Guise was stretched without movement at the foot of the bed. "Do you think that he is dead?" asked Henry. "I think so, Sire," replied the chief of the murderers, raising the victim's head; "for he has the colour of death." Then only did Henry dare to approach and look on the face of his dead enemy. "Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed; "what a size he is! He looks even bigger dead than living!" Then he pushed the body with his foot. Estoile states that he even kicked the dead man's face, an insult which Guise is said to have inflicted upon the body of the Admiral

de Coligny sixteen years before. But though Guise was dead, Henry's fears for his personal safety were by no means allayed. On the following day he had the Duke's brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, murdered in the tower which terminates the wing of Francis I on the west. Not many days after these two murders, a third death, but a natural one this time, took place in the château—the death of Catherine de' Medici. Brantôme, who wrote a eulogy of that great yet unscrupulous woman, says that she died from sorrow at the thought of having contributed to the crimes by “heedlessly bringing the princes to the palace.” “‘Alas! Madame,’ replied the Cardinal of Bourbon, ‘you have heedlessly led us all to the slaughter!’ And that remark, coupled with the death of those poor men, so touched her heart that she took to her bed, having previously been ill, and never rose from it again.”

In the eyes of the Kings of France, these two murders would appear to have cast an indelible blot on the fair name of the Château of Blois, for henceforth not a single one cared to inhabit it. Moreover, after the death of Henry III in 1589—a victim in his turn of the assassin's knife—only one more Duke



THE CHÂTEAU OF BLOIS



of Orleans chose it as a home, and that was the brother of Louis XIII, Gaston by name, who, in addition to being singularly insensible to beauty, was too obtuse to be affected by sanguinary memories. He it was who employed François Mansart to build the western wing, that cold, but stately building which faces you on entering the courtyard. Though a fine example of that architect's work, it left no other impression on our minds save a feeling of thankfulness that Gaston of Orleans did not pull down the other wings of the château and rebuild them in the formal style of his own day. That such was actually his intention is plain from the plans and sections published by Blondel.

After Gaston's death in 1660, when the château became the property of Louis XIV, its history as a royal residence rapidly drew to a close, only two members of royalty ever again occupying it,—namely, Mary Casimir, widow of John Sobieski, King of Poland, and the mother of King Stanislaus, who died there in 1722. Then came a period of decadence. It was offered for sale in 1774 and 1778, but without finding a purchaser, so the King in 1788 ordered its destruction! Fortunately the Revolution saved it from such an igno-

minious end, though the men of 1789 can by no means be exonerated from the blame of having committed many acts of vandalism both inside and outside the palace. Used as a barracks until 1842, the château—like the Palace of the Popes at Avignon, the Château of Nantes, and other fine old French buildings—suffered further injury from military hands. At last, lovers of architecture saw the necessity first of preservation and secondly of restoration; and the latter task—a most difficult and delicate one in the then existing state of the building—was begun in 1845, under the direction of Félix Duban, and continued until 1870, the year in which this zealous architect completed his last work, the decoration of the Chapel of Saint Calais.

Of the four masterpieces which I have already said are to be seen at Blois and in the surrounding country two had now revealed their beauties to us. Knowing that a close connection existed between one of them, the northern wing of the Château of Blois, and one of the others yet to be visited, the Château of Chambord, we decided to make this third example of Renaissance architecture the object of our next excursion, and to leave the fourth, the Château of Amboise, for a later



occasion during our sojourn on the banks of the Loire.

Blois and Chambord are associated, of course, through Francis, who, not satisfied with continuing his predecessor's work, felt a desire to build a palace which he could call entirely his own. His choice of a site was from some points of view unfortunate ; for he selected a marshy valley, watered by the little river Cosson, in the arid district known as the Sologne, some eleven miles from Blois. As so many other more suitable places for a royal house might have been found, it has been conjectured that this preference for one of the dreariest districts in France was dictated by the fact that a lady whom he had loved in his youth had a manor in the same neighbourhood. But that is a rather far-fetched suggestion, and it seems much more likely that he chose the site because it was on the outskirts of the forest of Boulogne, and in consequence eminently suited for indulging his well-known love of the chase.

One morning in mid July, before the sun had had time to make travelling irksome, we set out thither. Our road lay alongside the Loire, then but a puny stream placidly flowing in a broad uneven bed of yellow sand, dotted

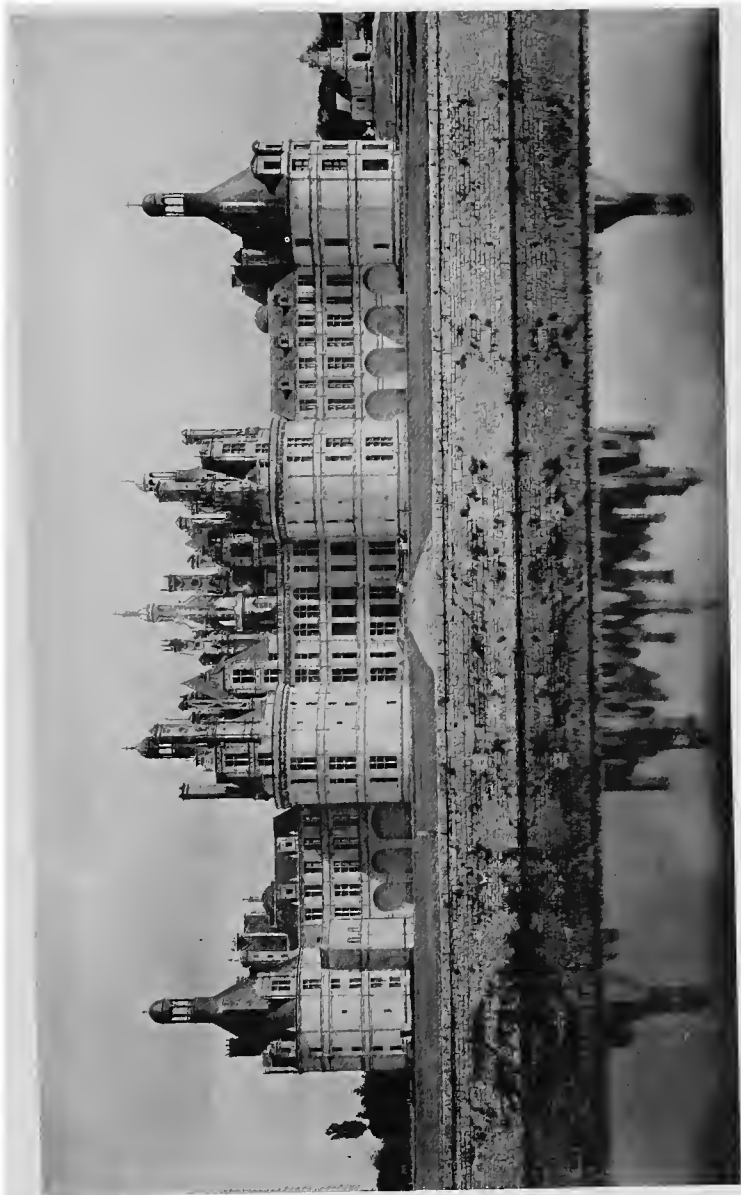
in parts with shallow pools, or bordered with rivulets which meandered here and there to join, at times, the narrow central channel. Whatever it might be farther down towards the sea, it was far from being at this part of its course the river "large comme un lac" of which Balzac writes in one of his short stories ; and no one, unless he had an inkling as to its character for capriciousness, would ever have thought that so peaceful a looking stream had inspired terror in the hearts of generations of farmers. But the very highway whence a fine prospect of its course is obtained clearly indicates its redoubtable nature. This road winds along the top of a high, broad embankment, originally constructed under Louis the Debonair, though not completed in its present state until the days of Philip the Fair, —an embankment whose purpose is manifest. Should you chance to be in Touraine at a particularly wet season, you will have an ocular demonstration of the invaluable services it can render. After a few hours' heavy rain the sandy bed of the Loire is no longer visible ; a week's steady downpour will see the yellow waters, now racing along with the swiftness of a mill stream, half-way up that twenty-foot buttress ; and in a month to six weeks they

will be level with the top, if they have not actually broken it down and flooded the valley for miles around. That has frequently happened, and tens of thousands of pounds' damage has resulted, hence the reputation of the Loire for being one of the most erratic and troublesome rivers in France. We followed it for nearly seven miles, passing the eighteenth century Château of Ménars, whose terraced gardens pleasantly descend the opposite bank. Then we branched off from the river to the right, passed through the hamlets of Montlivault and Maslives, traversed cornfields and vineyards, and at length reached one of the entrances to the domain of Chambord.

A long straight woodland avenue leads direct to the château, glimpses of which were obtained through the trees as we approached. Finally the entire huge construction came into view and positively seemed to crush us with its immensity. At the first glance, I thought of Viollet-le-Duc's description of it and felt how true it was. Chambord is, indeed, a "colossal caprice." At the same time, it was impossible not to admire the magnificent scale on which it is built and the beauty of its aerial forest of towers, domes, campaniles,

dormer-windows, and chimneys, with their wealth of ornamentation. A "colossal caprice" if you will, but one with the unmistakable stamp of genius upon it.

On attentively looking at this extraordinary building, it will be seen that it is composed of two structures, one above the other. The first consists of its outer walls with their large round towers, the feudal dwelling behind them, and the lordly manor; the second is the building above the terraces. To use the words of the great architect whom I have just quoted, it was an attempt on the part of the man who built it "to unite two programmes originating in two opposed principles,—an attempt to combine in a single edifice a fortified castle of the Middle Ages and a pleasure palace. We admit that the experiment was absurd. But the French Renaissance, in literature, science, and art, was full of such hesitations at its outset; it did not advance without sometimes casting a look of regret behind it; it wished to free itself from the past and yet feared to break away from tradition." Bearing the impress of its age, it is likewise stamped with the image of the king who inspired it. Francis was, in truth, a strange mixture of the barbarian and the man



THE CHÂTEAU OF CHAMFORD



CHAMBORD: A PORTION OF THE DOUBLE STAIRCASE

of culture, and a good deal of his character can be read in the architecture of Chambord. Having once settled on the plan for the palace, he set to work with extraordinary energy, in 1519, to execute it, and it is recorded that for about twelve years eighteen hundred workmen were busily engaged carrying out his wishes. His architects are supposed to have been Pierre Nepveu, also known by the name of Trinqueau, and Denis Sourdeau, the son of Jacques Sourdeau, who himself has received credit for a share in the work. But it is quite possible that others whose names have not been transmitted to posterity may have had as equal a right to fame as these. Perhaps, as M. Joseph de Croÿ suggests in his volume of documents relating to the royal residences of the Loire, the rôle of architect was filled "not by a single person but by a sort of collaboration, resulting from the royal incentive, the inspiration of artists who have remained anonymous, and the practical science of incomparable workmen." Many of the records which would have thrown light on this question having been made into cartridge cases in the Year V and blown to pieces on battlefields, it will probably remain a debatable one. Francis' original intention was to con-

struct only the group of buildings called the Donjon, but his ideas grew as the building progressed, and first one, then another part was added. The wings which prolong and surround the central block came first, and shortly after the galleries, the huge Lantern, and the terraces. It was a gigantic and complicated enterprise, and one whose practical difficulties would have been a stumbling-block to the keenest intelligence.

Our inspection of the interior of the château began by a visit to the guardroom, which is in the form of a Greek cross and occupies the entire ground-floor. Each of its arms is fifty feet long and more than thirty feet broad. At the point where they meet, the well-known double staircase—a constant source of wonder and amusement to visitors—rises through the centre of the building. It has two flights of steps, so that people can ascend and descend without meeting, though they are not prevented from catching a glimpse of each other through windows in the hollow newel;—a most convenient arrangement, we agreed, in the case of disunited lovers, and one which must have many times been taken advantage of by lords and ladies since the days of Francis. The merit of this curious invention cannot,



by the bye, be attributed to the builders of Chambord, for two similar staircases, dating from the fifteenth century, existed, and I believe still exist in Paris. Ascending one of the spirals, we reached, on the first storey, a second guardroom, which originally formed part of that on the ground-floor, and, a floor higher, the terraces. This, however, did not mark the end of our ascent. The staircase is surmounted by an immense structure, called the Lantern (a copy of the ancient one), which, in addition to being over thirty yards high, is tipped with a colossal fleur-de-lis. A narrow staircase leads almost to the summit, whence a view of the surrounding country, even as far as Blois, can be obtained on a clear day. After each locality had in turn been identified, we descended to the roof and walked about in its complication of terraces and balconies, amidst its multitudinous chimneys and gables, ornamented with all the exuberance of the sculptural art of the Renaissance. Whilst thus occupied the figure of Francis naturally loomed large in our imagination, for we could not forget that these terraces, with their shady nooks and corners, had been his favourite promenade, and the place where he loved to sit on summer evenings and admire

his aerial palace. Somewhere there, in all probability, he sat in March 1545, when, prematurely aged, his doctors ordered him rest, little suspecting as he mused that that was to be his last visit to Chambord. He left in the following May and died less than two years later. On our return to the interior of the château we were still thinking of his picturesque personality, and especially when in a little room, which was either his bedroom or study, near the eastern tower. Its arched ceiling is composed of sunk panels containing F's, salamanders, fleurs-de-lis, and cupids; at each end, in semicircular panels, are bas-reliefs representing cupids supporting the escutcheon of France surrounded by the Badge of Saint Michel; and its admirably preserved door is likewise ornamented with the King's familiar initial and emblem. It was on the left hand side of this room, near the window, according to Brantôme, that the amorous Francis, in a moment of pique at the fickleness of some fair lady, wrote the concise judgment :

"Toute femme varie,"

a quotation, probably, from a song of the day. The way in which certain highly imaginative



CHAMBORD: THE TERRACES



CHAMBORD: A PORTION OF THE DOUBLE STAIRCASE

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Our inspection of the interior of the château began by a visit to the guardroom, which is in the form of a Greek cross and occupies the entire ground-floor. Each of its arms is fifty feet long and more than thirty feet broad. At the point where they meet, the well-known double staircase—a constant source of wonder and amusement to visitors—rises through the centre of the building. It has two flights of steps, so that people can ascend and descend without meeting, though they are not prevented from catching a glimpse of each other through windows in the hollow newel ;—a most convenient arrangement, we agreed, in the case of disunited lovers, and one which must have many times been taken advantage of by lords and ladies since the days of Francis. The merit of this curious invention cannot,

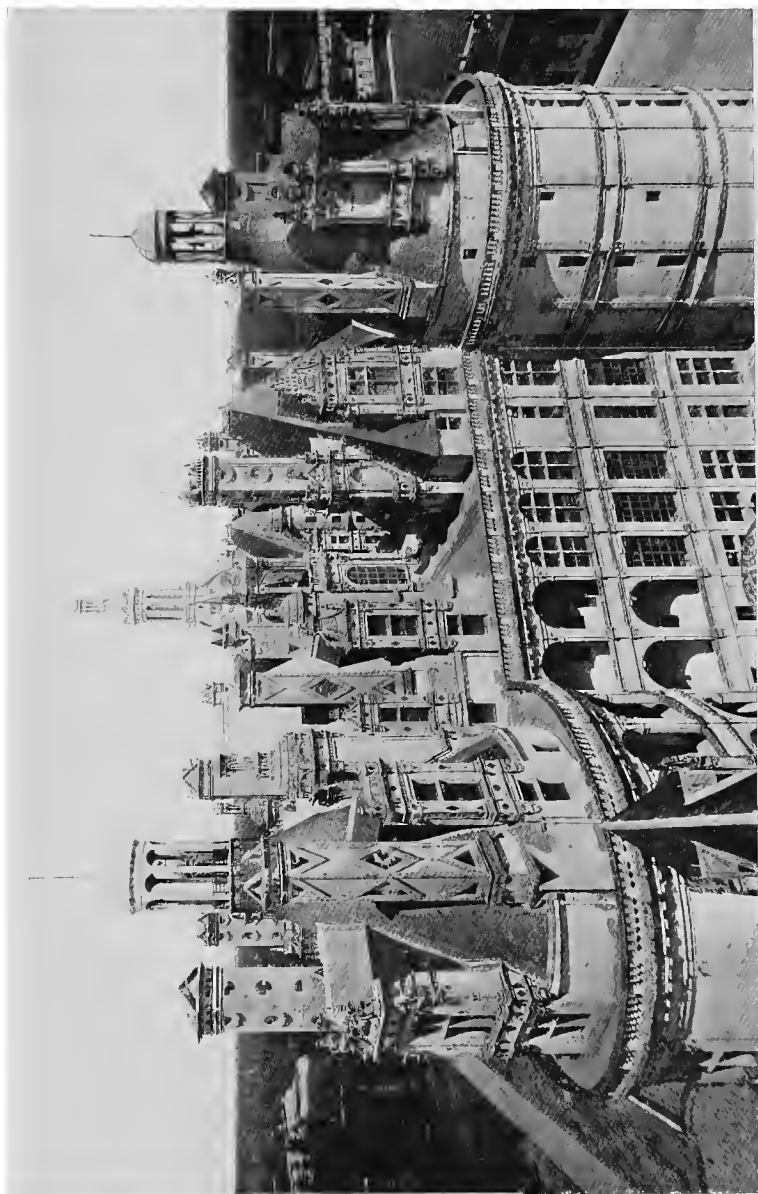
by the bye, be attributed to the builders of Chambord, for two similar staircases, dating from the fifteenth century, existed, and I believe still exist in Paris. Ascending one of the spirals, we reached, on the first storey, a second guardroom, which originally formed part of that on the ground-floor, and, a floor higher, the terraces. This, however, did not mark the end of our ascent. The staircase is surmounted by an immense structure, called the Lantern (a copy of the ancient one), which, in addition to being over thirty yards high, is tipped with a colossal fleur-de-lis. A narrow staircase leads almost to the summit, whence a view of the surrounding country, even as far as Blois, can be obtained on a clear day. After each locality had in turn been identified, we descended to the roof and walked about in its complication of terraces and balconies, amidst its multitudinous chimneys and gables, ornamented with all the exuberance of the sculptural art of the Renaissance. Whilst thus occupied the figure of Francis naturally loomed large in our imagination, for we could not forget that these terraces, with their shady nooks and corners, had been his favourite promenade, and the place where he loved to sit on summer evenings and admire

his aerial palace. Somewhere there, in all probability, he sat in March 1545, when, prematurely aged, his doctors ordered him rest, little suspecting as he mused that that was to be his last visit to Chambord. He left in the following May and died less than two years later. On our return to the interior of the château we were still thinking of his picturesque personality, and especially when in a little room, which was either his bedroom or study, near the eastern tower. Its arched ceiling is composed of sunk panels containing F's, salamanders, fleurs-de-lis, and cupids; at each end, in semicircular panels, are bas-reliefs representing cupids supporting the escutcheon of France surrounded by the Badge of Saint Michel; and its admirably preserved door is likewise ornamented with the King's familiar initial and emblem. It was on the left hand side of this room, near the window, according to Brantôme, that the amorous Francis, in a moment of pique at the fickleness of some fair lady, wrote the concise judgment :

"Toute femme varie,"

a quotation, probably, from a song of the day. The way in which certain highly imaginative





CHÂMBORD: THE TERRACES



historians of Chambord have distorted this simple story is remarkable. One has changed the King's sentence into the couplet :

“Souvent femme varie,  
Mal habil' qui s'y fie,”

and says it was written with a diamond on a window-pane ; whilst others, who give the variant :

“Souvent femme varie,  
Bien fol est qui s'y fie,”

have declared that the window upon which it was scratched was removed by Louis xiv in order that it might not hurt the feelings of Mlle. de la Vallière ! What a deal of trouble some writers do take over unnecessary embellishment ! In our opinion, at any rate, that charming little study required nothing more than its visible signs of Francis' former presence and the recollection of Brantôme's historiette, which he heard from the lips of one of the King's old valets, to make it thoroughly interesting. As to the other rooms of the château, I wish I could say that the attractions of the five or six (out of a total of three hundred and sixty-five) which are shown to visitors are equally satisfying. We were shown a dining-room containing a model

park of artillery,—one of the playthings of the infant Duke of Bordeaux, who, when Count of Chambord, had a chance of becoming the King of France,—and a collection of portraits, principally of royal personages ; a drawing-room filled with other uninteresting Bourbon portraits ; a bedroom ornamented with eighteenth century woodwork and hung with more canvases, including a portrait of Marie Leszcynski, attributed to Van Loo ; a modern bedroom containing a bed specially made for the Count of Chambord when he should ascend the French throne as Henry v, but in which he never slept ; and a council chamber hung with most unartistic tapestries worked by enthusiastic royalist ladies and containing a throne, made at Blois, on which the uncrowned King was never to sit. In the light of history, how full of irony some of these dead things do appear,—as truly ironical as the four gala carriages prepared for the coronation of Henry v, and still preserved at Chambord, but which you are permitted to see only by special authorisation !

After the death of Francis, the building of Chambord was continued by Henry II, as his initial and emblem on certain parts of the château show ; but neither he nor his im-

mediate successors completed it. Charles ix contributed his share. So did Catherine de' Medici, but only as regards restoration, being, presumably, too deeply engrossed in the study of astrology—she nightly consulted the stars from the Lantern during her frequent visits to the palace—to undertake more important work. But Henry iii and Henry iv accomplished even less, the latter preferring to reside in Paris, or at Saint Germain, or at Fontainebleau. During the greater part of the reign of Louis xiii and until 1660, the château belonged to Gaston of Orleans, who, when holding his little court there, divided his time between hunting and playing hide-and-seek with his daughter in the double staircase. Then came a period—brilliant enough in its way—when Chambord underwent changes. Louis xiv employed Mansart to build additional wings, such as the façade which so unfortunately masks the southern front; but the plans, happily, were never wholly carried out. A scheme of interior restoration was more satisfactorily executed, and transformed the rooms into a fitting setting for the brilliant gatherings which the King held there during his reign. Among these fêtes was a very noteworthy event in

the history of dramatic art; in September 1669, and October 1670, in the presence of the King, the first performances were given by Molière and his company of actors of *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. For this purpose one of the arms of the guardroom, that on the northern side of the first-floor, was converted into a theatre. In the eighteenth century Chambord was the residence of Stanislaus Leszcynski, the exiled King of Poland, and of Marshal de Saxe. The Revolution then swept down upon it, declared it national property, and sought to find a purchaser for it, but without success,—a result which was not at all surprising, considering that almost everything of value in its multitudinous rooms had been scattered to the winds. In 1809, Napoleon, who preserved it from falling into ruins, presented it to Berthier, Prince of Wagram, together with an annuity of £20,000, which was to be used in maintaining it in a good state of repair. Louis xviii having suppressed this annuity, Berthier's widow asked for permission to sell a property which she was quite unable to keep up. Consequently, on March 5, 1821, it was sold for £61,680 to the trustees of a national subscription, which

had been started by Count Adrien de Calonne for the purpose of presenting it to the Duke of Bordeaux, the prospective King of France, when a child only a little over a year old. For more than half a century Chambord belonged to the Duke, who changed his title in recognition of the gift. But he did not visit it more than twice, and he was too poor to carry out its much-needed restoration. On his death, in 1883, it was found that he had bequeathed the domain to his nephews, the Duke of Parma and the late Count of Bardi. The contents of his will caused some dissatisfaction in France, where the almost general feeling was that the Count had "forgotten" to return to France a typically French château. Within the past twenty years, Chambord, which yields a revenue of close upon £6000, has undergone extensive restoration; about £8000 a year is spent upon it, and up to the present total of nearly £80,000 has been expended. As to whether such lavish expenditure is justifiable may, perhaps, be open to doubt, though, so long as preservation against the effects of time is the only object in view, none, I think, will have much ground for criticism. But it would be otherwise if an attempt were made to make this Brobding-

nagian palace habitable for future generations of Bourbon princes, for one cannot conceive how its cheerless interiors and its draughty galleries, not to mention its by no means perfect situation, could ever be brought into line with modern ideas of comfort. As a permanent place of residence, in fact, its day is over ; it will never be more than a convenient *pied-à-terre* during the shooting season.

With many kindred reflections on the past and present of the Château of Chambord did we once more set out on our travels. As we went through the forest towards Bracieux, we took a last look at the confused mass of its grey towers and chimneys, silhouetted against a clear blue sky, and unanimously agreed that, though not so interesting either architecturally or historically as the Château of Blois, it was, nevertheless, a marvellous product of a marvellous age, and at the same time a touching monument of the ancient régime.



## CHAPTER II

### IN THE SAD SOLOGNE: AT CHEVERNY AND LASSAY

PLEASANTER surroundings than those amidst which we passed when travelling through the forest of Boulogne we had not up to then experienced. There was something to gratify nearly all the senses that warm summer afternoon. The air was redolent of pines ; the roadside was purple with heather ; and gentle woodland sounds fell soothingly upon the ear—the flutter of wings in the boughs, the call of a startled bird, the rustling of hidden things in the undergrowth, or the distant stroke of a woodman's axe. For close upon five miles did the straight shady road take us through the forest, and for nearly half an hour was our mood attuned to that of the Spirit of the Woods. Then both scene and mood changed. Receding farther and farther as we were from the Loire, we knew, however, that that was inevitable,

and that once the forest was left behind we should meet with landscape which would be as mournful as our sylvan highway was exhilarating. Full of regret we emerged from the avenue,—full of regret, but with our spirits fortified, as against a necessary evil, and, descending into the valley of the river Beuvron, reached the little village of Bracieux and the sad Sologne.

We had heard and read much about the Sologne, but until we actually met it face to face we did not fully realise what a cheerless district it is. Its wind-swept plains, in many parts covered with innumerable marshy lakes and ponds, cannot exactly be described as

“Wastes too bleak to rear  
The common growth of earth, the foodful ear,”

considering how much has been done since the middle of the last century, by drainage and the planting of hundreds of thousands of pine trees, to render them susceptible of cultivation. But at one time Wordsworth's lines would have been perfect in their application to the Sologne,—if they cannot, even now, be appropriately used in speaking of certain portions of it which are either still unreclaimed or rebellious to the arts of man.

This refractory character of its soil makes it a most striking contrast to fertile Touraine, every scrap of which is so carefully cultivated as often to give it the appearance of a huge market-garden ; and it is a question whether, with its clayey substratum, which imprisons the rain-water near the surface and forms fever-breeding pools, it will ever be otherwise. Yet it is a curious fact that its area of three thousand square miles was at one time, far back in history, both better adapted for agriculture and healthier than it is to-day. It was then covered with extensive forests, which sucked up a considerable quantity of the water of the marshes, and thus did man a double service,—which he was incapable, as it happened, of appreciating. For he set to work to cut down the trees in time of peace, and to burn them in time of war, and in this way gradually converted a district which Nature had made fairly decent into the arid, fever-stricken spot it was so comparatively recently—a district noted for its high death-rate and its weak and stunted population. Fortunately the last fifty to sixty years have seen a great improvement in the Sologne, largely owing to the growing of health-giving pine forests. Nevertheless, it

still remains a desolate land, a most uninviting one for travellers unless, as was our own case, they have compensatory objects in view.

We had, in fact, made up our minds to see two other châteaux before returning to Blois and descending the Loire: the Château of Cheverny and the Château du Moulin, near Lassay, whose attractions we had heard mentioned more than once. "It is worth travelling through many Solognes," some one had said, "to see two such charming old houses." So we had resolutely faced these dreary plains of Central France. As will be seen we were amply rewarded. After covering some six miles of uninteresting country, we reached the end of the first part of our journey, Cour-Cheverny and Cheverny, twin villages in a wooded valley, a veritable oasis in the desert. Well advanced though the afternoon was, there was yet time to visit the château, whose park gates we found were opposite the church, which itself is worthy of note both on account of its picturesque old wooden porch and the memorial tablets to members of the family to whom we owe that delightful manor-house.

The Château of Cheverny, which is built

in the style that reached its height under Louis XIV, but certain of whose details date from the close of the Renaissance, faces a long, broad avenue and a park planted with centennial trees. Within the shadow of its light and elegant façade, ornamented with marble and stone busts, standing in niches, are wide, green lawns and banks of flowers, the whole forming an ideal setting for a mansion which, unlike Chambord, has been put to its proper use since the day it was constructed.

But if its exterior and its grounds are attractive, how much more so did we find its homely interior ! With perfect courtesy we were shown, on the ground-floor, a corridor and dining-room decorated with painted panels representing scenes in the life of Don Quixote, the work of one of the numerous famous artists who have been natives of the valley of the Loire. Their author, Jean Mosnier, was born at Blois in 1600, and came of a family which had already shown a pronounced taste for art, both his father and grandfather being painters on glass. The former gave him his early lessons in painting ; but his more serious training, extending over eight years, was received in Italy, where he became a friend

of Poussin, and was due to the generosity of Marie de' Medici, who, when exiled in the château of his native town, was so struck with a copy of Andrea Solario's "*Vierge au coussin vert*," which the young painter had made for her, that she defrayed the cost of his education. On returning to France he would appear to have had no reason to complain of lack of commissions. For he did a number of decorative paintings for the Luxembourg Palace; an important series for the Bishop of Chartres' chapel and apartments; and numerous other works (in addition to those at Cheverny and at the Château of Valençay) for houses at Chinon, Nogent-le-Rotrou, Saumur, and Tours. The Cheverny decorations—and I am now referring not merely to his *Don Quixote* series but to the whole of the numerous paintings which he did for the château—were executed when he was at the height of his powers, and they give, to quote the words of Philippe de Chennevières, the author of a book on the provincial painters of France, "a true and splendid idea of the decorative magnificence of some of the French châteaux of the seventeenth century." In a beautiful state of preservation, they have undergone little restoration, as can easily be



THE CHÂTEAU DE CHEVERNY



A ROOM AT THE CHÂTEAU DE CHEVERNY



seen on close examination. There is a marked difference between the ancient and the modern work ; the old paint presents a rougher surface and is richer in colour, whereas the new has not much more in its favour than the technical skill with which it has been applied. Largely, however, as Mosnier's paintings contribute to the rich colouring of the dining-room and other rooms on the ground-floor, other works of art play an important part in the general scheme of decoration, and these must be mentioned before describing the apartments on the first-floor. In the dining-room, whose walls are covered with beautiful Cordova leather, stamped with a pattern in red and gold, and whose chairs are upholstered in the same material, is a fine Henry iv mantelpiece with a bust of Le Grand Monarque ; the drawing-room contains a mantelpiece ornamented with bas-reliefs of nymphs holding wreaths above their heads, in some respects identical with one by Germain Pilon in the Louvre ; and in other smaller rooms is a choice collection of portraits of the Hurault family by Clouet, Porbus, Mignard, and Largillière.

A staircase of white embroidered stone, as pure and as clear-cut as when it received the

finishing touches of its unknown sculptor, a certain F. L. whose initials, with the date 1634, are to be seen on a cartouche amidst the ornamentation, leads to the first storey. Here is an apartment, consisting of a guardroom, bedroom, and other smaller rooms, and known as the King's Apartment, which contains the château's most finely decorated rooms. In the guardroom the doors, wainscoting, panels of the shutters and ceiling form one mass of harmonious decoration,—a mass of figures, arabesques, flowers, and Latin mottoes. Mosnier strove to make every stroke of his brush symbolic, and how well and charmingly he succeeded you will see if you take the trouble to read his lines and discover the meaning of his floral designs. On one of the panels of the wainscot we noticed a tulip with the accompanying words: NIL NISI FLORE PLACET. That was perfectly straightforward, for everybody knows that this flower is only agreeable to look upon. But we were not so quick in finding a solution to the painter's choice of the tulip, rather than any other flower whose odour is also not agreeable; it took us a minute or two to remember that he decorated this room at a time when tulip-growing, introduced by the Dutch, was the

fashion in France. The symbolism of a daffodil, and the motto *MEI ME PERDIDIT ARBOR* was again quite clear,—or we had forgotten the story of the son of Cephisus and his metamorphosis into a narcissus. A sunflower and the words *ARMA GERO COMITIS*—“I bear the arms of a count”—was a fairly transparent allusion to the arms of the Counts of Cheverny. The painting which gave us most trouble was one of a trumpet-creeper, with the inscription : *ADVENA CHARVS HOSPITI*—“A foreigner, dear to its host” ; and we should never, perhaps, have solved the problem had not a botanical friend informed us that this plant was imported into France from America in Mosnier’s day, and that evidently he foresaw it would become a favourite with French horticulturists. When the novelty of unravelling these floral conundrums had somewhat worn off we turned our attention to other things, and found much to interest us, notably a fine painting of “Venus and Adonis,” by Mosnier, over a mantelpiece ornamented with caryatides and statues in gilded wood, and a Flemish tapestry representing the “Abduction of Helen.” Then we passed into the adjoining *Chambre du Roi*, which I have no hesitation in saying is the most

interesting room in the château. With the exception of a single painting, it has lost nothing of its original decoration, and both Mosnier's works and the magnificent Beauvais tapestries, representing the "Adventures of Ulysses," look as fresh as though they had been painted and made but yesterday. The paintings on the ceiling and above the richly carved mantelpiece and door depict scenes in the story of Perseus, whilst those on the panels, numbering no fewer than thirty, are devoted to the love story of Theagenēs and Charicleia. Mosnier evidently had a great fondness for Heliodorus' erotic romance, for he twice took his inspiration from it, once at Cheverny and once when working for the Bishop of Chartres. This royal bed-chamber also contains an ancient bedstead and a curious old chest which is said to have been the *coffre de voyage* of Henry iv.

Such are the chief characteristics of the Château of Cheverny. There now remains but little more to be said except a few words about the family which built it and about certain other owners who must not be overlooked, since they helped in no small measure to preserve its beauties intact. The exact date at which its founders, a Breton

family of the name of Hurault, settled in the district of Blois, is unknown, but it was some time about the end of the fourteenth century. It is known for certain, however, that at the beginning of the sixteenth century General Raoult Hurault built a house at Cheverny on the site now occupied by the outbuildings of the present château ; that it was in this house, in 1528, that the famous chancellor, Philippe Hurault, who considerably enlarged the estate, was born ; and that his eldest son, the second Count of Cheverny, pulled down part of the buildings erected by his ancestors and built the existing mansion. The exact date of its construction was 1634, and its plans were drawn up by Boyer, an architect of Blois, who in all probability was assisted in his work by many well-known sculptors of the period. After the death of the Count, who had no male issue, the house and lands surrounding it became the property of his younger daughter, Elizabeth, the wife of the Marquis de Montglas. At the beginning of the eighteenth century their descendants sold it to a lady named d'Harcourt, who in turn disposed of it to Count Dufort de Saint Leu, Lieutenant-General to the King, who made him Count of Cheverny. But the magnificent

hospitality with which the new owner entertained at the château so diminished his fortune that at his death his son and heir was obliged to sell the property. It was bought by Count Jean Pierre Germain, a wealthy banker, but again sold, this time to a M. Guillot and his son. Two years afterwards M. Guillot *père* died. His son married, but, having no children to whom to leave the château, he and his wife were struck with the generous idea of offering it to the descendants of the family which had built it, in order to preserve it from falling into unworthy hands. Accordingly, in 1825, it was purchased by the Marquise de Hurault de Vibraye for her son, the Marquis Paul de Vibraye, who showed himself eminently worthy of possessing so splendid a house. He it was, in fact, who undertook its restoration,—and intelligent restoration, too, for he was both an archæologist and an artist. Indeed, this representative of a great family was in knowledge and accomplishments far above the average of country gentlemen. In addition to restoring his residence to its original condition, and to transforming large tracts of waste ground on his estate into fruitful agricultural and forest land, he was busily occupied for more

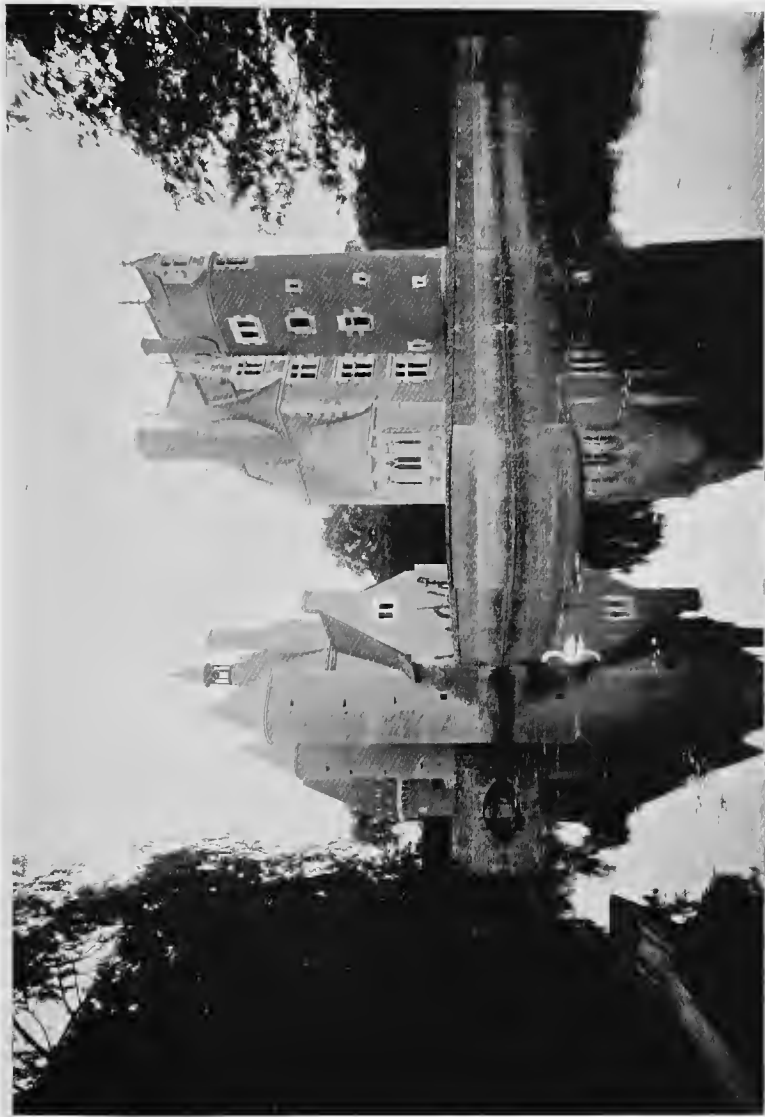
than forty years in forming valuable mineralogical, geological, and other collections, including a number of objects relating to the study of primitive man. He died in 1878, leaving the château to his eldest son, the Marquis Henri Hurault de Vibraye, its present owner.

From Cheverny to Lassay, which lies a little way off the main road from Blois to Romorantin amidst characteristic Sologne scenery, is a distance of about twelve miles. When we had already covered ten of them we reached the village of Mur, a more important place than the neighbouring hamlet of Lassay, and, consequently, better able to provide accommodation for travellers. Night had fallen. Manifestly it was then too late to make use of our letter of introduction to the owner of the Château du Moulin, even if dinner at an inviting inn had not imperatively summoned us to table. So we prepared to do justice to what the landlord assured us was the best that Mur could offer, and gladly fell in with his numerous suggestions to make us comfortable for the night. But at the close of that simple yet admirably cooked meal, all desire for repose, as far as I was concerned, had vanished ; on the contrary, an irresistible

longing to be out under the stars in the then pleasantly cool summer air, and to stretch my legs along country roads, came upon me. Therefore, whilst my friend retired to rest, I sauntered forth. The village was almost asleep. Only a few lights twinkled here and there from cottage windows, or streamed in a flood through the open door of a *cabaret*. Soon I came to the last of the houses and entered the open country. After walking for not far short of an hour, ruminating on what we had seen during the day, I suddenly caught sight, between some trees and in the light of the moon, of a glint of water and the dim outline of a building. A dozen yards farther brought it into fuller view, and at the same time I recognised that the Château du Moulin, surrounded by its moat, was before me.

In the case of every ancient building there is one particular hour of the day when it looks better than at any other. One will impress you most when seen in full sunlight; another should be viewed in the gray of evening; and a third will be in greatest accord with its dominant characteristic in the subdued light of a melancholy autumn day. It is no man's good fortune, alas! to see every





THE CHÂTEAU DU MOULIN



one exactly under its right aspect ; he must leave this question of time to be decided by Fate, and consider himself lucky if, now and then, his visit coincides with the happy hour. Thus had my impromptu nocturnal excursion led me to hit on the ideal moment for seeing the Château du Moulin. Darkly reflected in the placid moonlit water of the moat, its character as a perfect type of the feudal manor-house could not have been more strikingly emphasised. Its graceful towers and pinnacles rising into a luminous sky sown with stars, a dark background of trees, the moon overhead, and their counterpart in the mysterious water, formed so romantic a picture that I should have been tempted to have compared it to a scene on the stage had I not recognised that the most skilful theatrical *mise-en-scène* could never attain such a degree of poetry or such exquisite chiaroscuro.

As I continued to gaze on this beautiful sight, memories of the builder of the château and of olden times sprang up one by one. Philippe du Moulin, a simple but wealthy squire, the descendant of a certain Jehan du Molin, had decided to build a house suitable to his station, and had chosen Jacques de

Persigny as his architect. It was the year 1480. Ten years later he had been granted a charter by Charles, Count of Angoulême and Lord of Romorantin, authorising him to fortify his manor-house with "towers, barbicans, loop-holes for cannon, for crossbowmen, and for archers, drawbridge, moat, and other things necessary for defence." Meanwhile he had married a wealthy lady named Charlotte d'Argouges, and possibly had found her money useful in carrying out these warlike additions to his château, which, as a matter of fact, could very well have done without them, since it was never to be attacked. Not that Philippe du Moulin was not a fighter, for, like every gentleman of his day, he was a soldier by profession. But he used his energies in the service of his King and against no one save the enemies of his country. In his youth, in 1447, he had doubtless assisted Charles of Orleans in his fruitless attempt to conquer the Duchy of Milan, and after his marriage he had once more, under the leadership of Charles VIII, taken the road to Italy. The latter campaign had marked one of the turning-points in his life. Two months before the battle of Fornovo, in which, on July 6, 1495, some nine

thousand Frenchmen put to flight thirty-five thousand Italians, he had been made a member of the King's Council ; a few hours before the engagement, which had most far-reaching effects on the world's history, he had been knighted ; and he had taken so prominent a part in the fight as to merit special mention by the chronicler, Philippe de Commynes. Another historian, Jean de Serres, mentioned him as one of a group of gentlemen who had saved the King's life by coming to his assistance when he had imprudently entered a particularly dangerous part of the battle, but Commynes, who had been an eye-witness, gave a somewhat different and probably correcter version. The author of *La Chronique de Charles VIII* stated that the Bastard of Bourbon and Philippe du Moulin had called out to the King "Passez, Sire, passez !" and had thus made him take a place, mounted on his famous one-eyed black charger Savoy, at the head of the fight, in front of the standard. As a result of this service more honours had been heaped upon the builder of the Château du Moulin ; he had been made Captain of Blaye and Governor of Langres, and, generally speaking, had attained a high position at Court. Had he not been the

King's Chamberlain, and in that quality one of the pall-bearers at the funeral of Charles VIII? Eight years later, on September 12, 1506, he himself had died at Langres, regretting as the end drew near that he was not in his beloved manor-house in the Sologne, and expressing a wish, which was faithfully carried out, that his heart be placed in the church he had built at Lassay. How a simple fact like that brought one into touch with the personality of this feudal knight! Legend represented him to have been a miser, but such a tender detail as that proved he possessed sensibilities which are not usually associated with avarice. The story ran that he sought to hide a treasure beneath his castle, and that the workman whom he employed to make a hiding-place was led there at dead of night and blindfolded, in order that he might not know where he was working. But at the conclusion of the work Philippe du Moulin perceived that his precautions were useless, so, drawing his sword in a fit of anger, he killed the man on the very spot where his gold was to be hidden. A short time afterwards he was stricken with remorse, and obtained the Pope's absolution on the condition that he

built seven chapels, more than four of which the superstitious inhabitants of the Sologne—a district of legends—can still point out in support of a story which, recalled even under such favourable conditions as a moonlight night, far from convinced me of its truth.

Our visit to the château on the following morning considerably added to my knowledge of its history. It is built principally of red and black bricks, so arranged as to form a pleasing pattern of lozenges. It has neither been added to nor undergone many alterations since the fifteenth century, the only important changes having been the destruction of some of the towers of the fortress, the cutting down of its walls to a convenient level, and the removal of the drawbridge. A stone bridge now leads over the moat to the *château-fort*, the entrance of which is machicolated and flanked by towers. Over the gateway, carved on a block of stone, are the arms of Philippe du Moulin: azure, three fesses argent, accompanied by two lions, surrounded by Renaissance ornamentation, as supporters. On the door itself is the inscription: A DEO ET VICTRICIB ARM—"A Deo et victricibus armis," which, in all likelihood, alludes to the Italian

campaign of Charles VIII, and is an acknowledgment by Philip of the assistance he received from God when fighting at Fornovo. His arms are also to be seen on the mantelpiece of one of the rooms situated above the entrance. We found that the most interesting room in this portion of the château was a kitchen with beautiful vaulted roof. It has a broad deep fireplace, and, in addition to a pair of fifteenth century andirons, bearing the arms of Philippe du Moulin, still possesses the roasting-wheel which in feudal times was worked by dogs.

The manor-house, which is detached from the *château-fort*, consists of six large rooms and a like number of smaller ones, with attics and cellars. The principal room is that now called the drawing-room, which is noteworthy on account of its ceiling painted with a floral design dating from the time of Francis I, its curious prism-shaped main beam, and its ancient windows. The chimney-piece, on which are the arms of the various families to whom the château has belonged, is modern work, as is the case, indeed, with mantelpieces in other rooms. The original ones were destroyed during the Revolution.

Adjoining this residence and communicating





THE DRAWING-ROOM AT THE CHÂTEAU DU MOULIN



THE MEDIEVAL KITCHEN AT THE CHATEAU DU MOULIN

with the salon is a charming little chapel dating from a period a little later than that of the manor-house itself, and surmounted by a lead cross of remarkable workmanship. The most important thing it contains is a small primitive statue of St. Catherine in painted stone, probably one of a number of similar statues which ornamented the chapel of the Moulin family in the church at Lassay. One is led to this conclusion by the fact that there are certain empty brackets above the tomb in which the heart of Philippe du Moulin is enclosed, and because of the discovery at the time of the restoration of the château of the remains of another statue whose place can likewise be indicated in the parish church. "This statue," says M. Paul Vitry, "is certainly anterior to the construction of this charming habitation . . . ; it may have been executed during the first half of the fifteenth century. It is a purely French work, without heaviness of style or superabundance of detail. Its drapery, which shows great skill and judgment, and which at the same time is most simple, has the same long, straight folds as the Virgin of Marturet. Its fresh and youthful face possesses the same quiet and penetrating grace, with greater exuberance of health and less

roguishness than was found in the fourteenth century, but without attaining, however, the Flemish or Burgundian rotundity of the fifteenth." And the same writer adds in a note: "It is thus to be clearly distinguished from other works equally charming, but in which the Flemish character is more accentuated; for instance, from another St. Catherine which is in the Bulliot Collection at Autun."<sup>1</sup>

There is an inscription on the right hand side of the door of the chapel which reminds me that I have so far mentioned but one owner of the Château du Moulin. It records the death, on April 3, 1563, of Jehan III, the son and heir of Philippe du Moulin. He married a lady named Gabrielle de La Chastre, but as he had no children the château became the property of his sister Margaret and her husband Vincent du Puy. It was then owned in succession by the allied houses of Anlezy, Barbançon, Savare, and De Thuet, thus passing from one descendant to another of Philippe du Moulin for more than four centuries! Only in 1902, in fact, was the chain broken by its sale to the late M. Marcel de Marchéville, the father of the present owner, M. Louis

<sup>1</sup> *Michel Colombe et la Sculpture Française de son temps.*

de Marchéville. It was the former gentleman who, with the assistance of M. Charles Genuys, a well-known architect, undertook the restoration of the *château*,—a work which has been accomplished with exemplary judgment and skill. But one instance of the care which has been taken need be given. Crowning the roof of the *château-fort* is an elegant campanile which until recent years was missing. The existence of such a bell-tower was first brought to light on closely examining a picture of the *château* depicted in the background of a curious fifteenth century fresco in the Du Moulin chapel at the Lassay church; and on a search being made for the site of this tower it was at once discovered. Not often is the restoration of an ancient building aided in such an unexpected and interesting manner.

A pilgrimage to this chapel to see the fresco and the tomb of Philippe du Moulin was a fitting conclusion to our visit to Lassay. The picture represents St. Christopher crossing a river with the infant Jesus on his shoulders; in his left hand he holds a tree; and his features are believed to be those of the knight whose heart reposes in the tomb beneath the painting. The stone statue of Philip, reclin-

ing on the tomb, is much damaged, but enough remains to show that his hands are joined in prayer, that his helmet and buckler are at his side, and that his feet are resting on a couchant lion.

## CHAPTER III

### BACK TO THE LOIRE: AT CHAUMONT AND AMBOISE

TO travel from the source to the mouth of an important river, and to note its varying characteristics as it grows in size and strength, must be counted among a traveller's most delightful experiences, whether he be a geographer, a moralist, or a mere dilettante. For, of all the inanimate things of Nature, a stream possesses the greatest semblance of humanity ; it shares with its living associates the trees the honour of having a personality ; and it is endowed with that quality of unobtrusive sociability which is ever found in the best companions. So, at least, we were pleased to think as, in a fanciful mood, we turned our backs on Blois and entered on the first stage of our journey down the Loire. Our plan was to follow for eighty miles the verdant valley through which it winds towards the sea, and we were naturally looking forward

to several days' intimate acquaintanceship with a stream whose beauties form one of the chief attractions of the scenery of Touraine. Stretching out to distant horizons, bounded by wooded slopes, the sandy-bedded river, with its pollard willows and its green islets, adds the necessary touch of animation to landscapes which, characterised by that peaceful and smiling picturesqueness which some one, centuries ago, summed up in the now hackneyed phrase "The Garden of France," would otherwise border on monotony. It is the river which gives this valley of green pastures and cornfields and vine-clad ridges that note of individuality which remains firmly fixed in the memory long years after it has been visited.

Apart from these impressions, my notebook contains little else than a bare record of our ten-mile run to Chaumont. The day, I see, was bright and sunny. A fresh breeze was blowing from the sea, bringing with it the scent of flowers and covering the scant waters of the river, which flashed in the sunlight for miles, with myriads of little waves. Hundreds of multi-coloured butterflies flitted and skipped along the highway, prompting the remark that Touraine must be one of the entomologist's ideal hunting-grounds. And workers in







the fields, in attitudes reminiscent of figures in Millet's pictures, were cutting the corn—disdainful of modern machinery—with scythes and sickles. Amidst these surroundings did we finally come within sight of the heavy towers of the Château of Chaumont rising from the trees on a wooded ridge which skirts the left bank of the Loire.

Crossing the river by a creaking, swaying suspension bridge, we passed through the village, the houses of which run parallel with the water, and reached the entrance to the castle grounds. A long, steep, shady avenue, which mounts the hill until you are high above the spire of the village church, leads direct to the château, a formidable-looking building with stubborn machicolated towers and a drawbridge. Its architecture is a mixture of late Gothic and early Renaissance. Sparingly ornamented, its embellishments are yet sufficiently striking to arrest the attention. Above the porch are the crowned initials of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany, surrounded by fleurs-de-lis; on the right and left towers are the arms of Charles of Chaumont and those of his famous brother Cardinal George of Amboise; whilst on both appear the interlaced initials and the flaming mountain which

the former nobleman, who was Grand Master of France under Louis XII, and the builder of the château, chose as his emblems. On other parts of the towers can also be seen the initials of Henry II and Catherine de' Medici, but these, like those of Louis and Anne, were placed there merely as symbols of allegiance, and are not an indication that it was a royal residence. Their interest, therefore, is secondary to that which we feel for the arms and initials of the two men whose names recall the early history of this celebrated castle.

George of Amboise was born in 1460 in a château which preceded the present one, and which had belonged to his family since the twelfth century. The history of this earlier fortress can be traced even farther back than that,—as far back, indeed, as the end of the tenth century, when Eudes I, Count of Blois, one of Theobald the Trickster's successors, recognised the strategic importance of this point of the valley of the Loire. It is unnecessary, however, to do more than mention this primitive stronghold, seeing that one's interest nowadays is almost wholly centred on the existing château and on the various families to whom it has belonged.

Passing from one member of the Amboise

family to another, it came into the possession, about the middle of the sixteenth century, of Charles and Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, the sons of Antoinette of Amboise, the great-great-niece of the builder of the château. But they did not long retain it, owing to its purchase in 1560 by Catherine de' Medici, who required it for a somewhat curious purpose. In the previous year, the accession to the throne of Francis II had been marked by bitter rivalry between Catherine and Diana of Poitiers, who, in addition to being exiled from Court, had been made to return the Crown jewels. Now, among the gifts which the fair favourite had received from Henry II was the Château of Chenonceaux, — the one country mansion above all others which Catherine had the greatest desire to possess. So she determined, by fair means or foul, to obtain it. A threat to revoke all the gifts of Francis I and Henry II brought Diana to terms : she agreed to exchange Chenonceaux for Chaumont. Up to this point history is perfectly clear. However, one important question remains to be considered :—Was Chaumont in Catherine's possession for a number of years before the transaction, as has been contended, or did she buy it simply with the object of an exchange ?

Unfortunately for all the fine romantic stories which have been built up around Catherine and Chaumont, not to mention the brilliant work of misguided restorers, of which more anon, it would seem that the latter hypothesis must be accepted as the correct one. For an unbroken list of owners of the château can be shown for the years during which she is said to have owned it, and, moreover, the exact date on which she became the legal owner is now known,—March 21, 1560,—although, strange to say, the exchange of châteaux took place on the previous January 4.

Without entering into the respective merits of Chaumont and Chenonceaux, subsequent events show that Diana had by no means the best of the bargain. She did not come into possession of her new home until April 27. But even then she could hardly call it her own ; and it was not, in fact, until April 9, 1562, that she was left to enjoy it at her ease. Four years later she died, leaving her property to her daughter, the Duchess of Bouillon.

Coming down to the eighteenth century, Chaumont was sold in 1739 to Nicolas Bertin de Vaugien, who destroyed a façade facing the Loire and made other architectural alterations. Eleven years later, under a new owner, Jacques

Donatien Le Ray, its fortunes underwent a startling change: it became the scene of industrial activity, one form of which was a manufactory of terra-cotta medallions designed and executed by an Italian artist Jean Baptiste Nini, whose works are now much sought after by collectors. M. Le Ray was a generous-hearted, broad-minded gentleman, and a daring man of business to boot. He was a friend of Franklin, who, whilst acting as American Minister to France from 1777 to 1785, lived rent-free in one of his houses adjoining the Hôtel de Valentinois, at Passy, in the suburbs of Paris. During the first year of his residence in the capital Franklin was, in all probability, a guest at Chaumont, for one of Nini's finest works is a portrait-medallion of the great envoy, dated 1777. M. Le Ray devoted a large part of his fortune to colonisation schemes in the United States. On his death in 1803 these were continued by his eldest son, who regarded that country as so much his own as to fight for her in the War of Independence. Whilst he was still in America, Madame de Staël, another of the friends of this liberty-loving father and son, had one of her numerous quarrels with Napoleon, and was exiled from Paris; so M. Le Ray *fil*s

gallantly placed Chaumont at her disposal. On his return to France in 1823 he sold the château to Baron d'Etchégoyen. Ten years afterwards it became the property of Count and Countess Sauvan d'Aramon, who, seeing that it was falling into ruins, began its restoration. This work, which was carried out by M. de la Morandière, an architect of the school of Félix Duban, under whom he worked at the Château of Blois, was continued by Viscount Walsh, the Countess' second husband. The death of Viscountess Walsh in 1872 brings us to the time when the château was sold to Mlle. Say, who, a few months after purchasing it, married Prince Henri Amédée de Broglie, the great-grandson of the authoress of *Corinne*. The Prince and Princess, who are still the owners of the château, continued its restoration until quite recently, and, as we found on visiting the interior, have beautified its rooms with many fine pieces of furniture and works of art dating from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.

Conscious of that feeling of respect with which every building of renown should be approached, and especially when entrance is being sought to one that is a private residence,





ENTRANCE TO THE CHÂTEAU OF CHAUMONT



CHAUMONT: A PORTION OF THE COURTYARD

we rang a bell at the postern. We were admitted immediately and shown into a large courtyard, one side of which is open to the valley. The view from this quadrilateral platform is magnificent,—the eye can follow the river, both up and down its winding course, for mile upon mile, until, at last, it becomes but a mere silver thread in the distance. Well content were we to be left there, before seeing the historical rooms of the château, to enjoy it at our ease, and also to examine the courtyard in detail. Richer in ornamentation than the exterior of the castle, it contains several things worthy of note, such as a carved stone well with beautifully proportioned wrought-iron superstructure, a small Renaissance doorway, a painted corridor composed of arcades with sculptured capitals, and the carvings on the outer pillars of the Louis XII staircase leading to the first storey of the right wing of the château—the only storey, by the bye, which is open to the public.

It is evident that much time and thought, assisted by a long purse, have been spent over the decoration and furnishing of Chaumont, and, on the whole, with satisfactory results. If errors have been committed, I must at the

same time admit that they do not seriously interfere with the picture of the past which its rooms and their contents call before the mind. The rather diminutive guardroom is appropriately ornamented with fifteenth and sixteenth century arms and armour ; in its wide fireplace stand huge bronze andirons ; beautiful old furniture is on every side ; on its walls are choice Flemish paintings and Beauvais tapestries ; and its painted ceiling, dating from the middle of the sixteenth century, bears the arms of the Houses of Chaumont and Amboise. We noticed but one jarring note in this eminently fine room—and that could easily be remedied. I refer to some show-cases containing *souvenirs de Chaumont*—cheap jewellery and crudely coloured pottery, placed there by the *concierge* to tempt the inartistic visitor, and in such close proximity to rare works of art, including a fine Italian seat with a back in *gesso* work, as positively to shock a connoisseur's nerves. Surely these trumpery objects should be relegated to their proper sphere—the janitor's lodge ? In an adjoining room, called the Council Chamber, our attention was attracted first by a magnificent tiled floor brought from Palermo, representing a hunting scene, and secondly by some

specimens of Italian faience. But these did not long retain us, anxious as we were to reach the so-called bedroom of Catherine de' Medici and that of Ruggieri, her astrologer. Infinite care has been taken to furnish the former with as many relics of the Queen as could be obtained : her bed, her toilet-table, her praying-desk, and even her *corbeille de mariage*. As historical curiosities these are undoubtedly full of interest. But how misleading they are when set out in a room bearing the name of the great Florentine, and how open to criticism is the work of those restorers who have gone to legend rather than to history for their inspiration ! Naturally, the conclusion arrived at by a person unacquainted with the facts is that Chaumont was once the Queen's residence, the scene of her extraordinary political activity, and of her astrological studies. Ruggieri's room, the mantelpiece of which is ornamented with cabalistic signs, and which, it is said, communicates with an observatory by means of a secret staircase, is contiguous and confirms the impression. Yet nothing is farther from the truth. As I have already shown, Catherine was never anything save a nominal owner of the château, which she bought merely in order to exchange it for another. There

is not a tittle of historical evidence in her correspondence to show that she ever resided there. In fact, the only basis for the contention that she was intimately connected with Chaumont is the legend recorded by Nicolas Pasquier in 1610, and repeated by Félibien in 1680, that Ruggieri revealed to her at this castle the number of years her children and their successors would reign. Admitting that there may be a grain of truth in this story, and that during the reign of Henry II Catherine and the Court made occasional visits to Chaumont, as they were accustomed to do to various châteaux, it is, at any rate, certain that the room in which her astrological *séances* were held no longer exists. For we are told that it formed part of the "oldest buildings" and had "a view of the water," from which it is evident that it was situated in the wing destroyed in the eighteenth century. Confronted with these disillusionising facts, both Catherine's and Ruggieri's room will be found to be the least satisfactory of the historical apartments of Chaumont, though they are intended to be the most important. Had the bed and the other objects which belonged to her been in the northern wing of the Château of Blois their effect would have been magnifi-

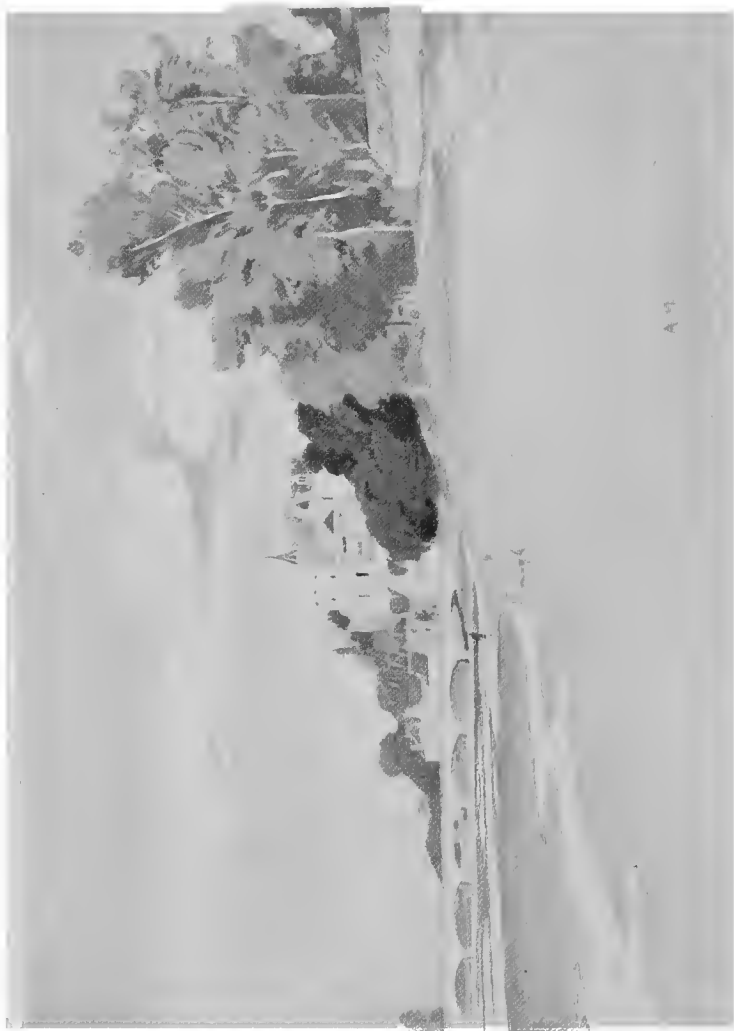
cent ; as it is, you look upon them with very little more emotion than if they had been in an ordinary museum. A fine collection of Nini's medallions in the same room is much more in its place. The bedroom which is said to have been that occupied by Diana of Poitiers has also, I suspect, been arbitrarily chosen. It is situated in one of the towers, is exceedingly modest in size, and its only entrance is from the guardroom, where the clash of arms and the boisterous laughter of the soldiery can hardly have contributed to the rest of the fair occupant of the adjoining chamber.

To wander in the delightful park which surrounds the Château of Chaumont was a pleasure denied to us, warned as we were by a notice-board that to stray from the main avenue was forbidden, so as there was nothing more to be seen we left the sleepy little village and, still descending the Loire, proceeded to Amboise, which held forth attractions second to none save those of Blois itself. For Amboise, owing to its situation at the confluent of the Loire and the Masse, is one of the oldest towns in Touraine, and possesses a castle whose story is interwoven with the history of France. The Gauls were the first to recognise how well the plateau at the

junction of the two rivers commanded the valley of the Loire ; the Romans, too, were quick to see its suitability for an encampment ; and the Counts of Anjou built there a Gothic château which existed until as late as the end of the fifteenth century. It was on the site of this early building, in which but one noteworthy event took place, the interview between Thomas à Becket and Louis VII, who had undertaken to bring about a reconciliation between the Archbishop and Henry II of England, that the present castle was built by Charles VIII and his successors. The work was begun about 1490, but it was not completed until the reign of Francis I.

The afternoon was still young when we obtained our first glimpse of Amboise, and as we approached by way of the two bridges over the Loire, which at this point of the river is divided into two branches by the Ile St. Jean, we imagined we had chanced on the ideal hour for seeing it. But, in our enthusiasm at finding so royal and imposing a building, we were mistaken. The best time for viewing it is towards evening, when the shadows cast by the stooks in the cornfields and by the poplars along the roadside are growing longer and longer, and when the last





AMBOISE



rays of the declining sun light up its massive towers and its pinnacled windows. Then, enclosed to right and left in a mass of greenery, does it stand out in greatest relief, its white stonework turned to gold and its ornamentation enhanced a hundredfold by virtue of the coloured glow of evening. Standing on an elevated tongue of land, it towers above the distinctly dusty little town, the ancient houses of which run alongside the river and cluster beneath its precipitous walls. These have such an air of impregnability that we failed at first to discover a means of reaching the summit of the plateau, and it was only on attacking them in the rear that we espied the entrance, a simple opening in a low wall, guarded by nothing more redoubtable than two decrepit mendicants. From this point can be obtained a good view of the exterior of St. Hubert's Chapel, an exquisite construction with a slender, graceful spire encircled by gilded antlers. Ascending a winding path and passing through a lofty tunnel cut in the hillside, we at last reached the castle grounds, where the first thing to be seen was the entrance and interior of this chapel, which was built by Charles VIII partly before and partly after his Italian campaign.

Commynes relates that the young King brought back with him from Naples several excellent Italian artists and workmen, and that in whatever country he saw beautiful things—whether in France, in Italy, or in Flanders—he secured them. Among these Italian artists were Guido Pagaganino, a “maker of images,” and his wife and daughter, both of whom were painters. They and their compatriots were exclusively employed on the interior decoration of the château, as is clear from the fact that its architecture bears no trace of Italian influence. Similarly, the general style of St. Hubert’s Chapel is undoubtedly French. Only on examining its ornamentation can a foreign element be detected, the delicate sculpture of the interior and the work in high relief over the doorway (I do not refer, of course, to the figures of Charles and Anne of Brittany kneeling to the Virgin, which are quite modern) having been executed either by Flemish sculptors or copied from Flemish models by French workmen. This beautiful *alto-rilievo* represents the vision of St. Hubert. The famous huntsman, who, according to legend, was converted one fête day whilst hunting in the Forest of Ardennes, and who afterwards became Bishop of Liège, is to be



ST. HUBERT'S CHAPEL AT AMBOISE AND ENTRANCE TO THE CASTLE



ENTRANCE TO ST. HUBERT'S CHAPEL AT AMBOISE

seen to the right with his horse and dogs ; and the sculptor has represented him in the act of kneeling on one knee before the miraculous stag between whose antlers, as he hears a voice crying " Hubert ! Hubert ! how long wilt thou spend thy time uselessly ? Knowest thou not that thou wert born to know, to love, and to serve thy Creator ? " there springs forth a crucifix. To the left are two other figures : one St. Christopher bearing Christ on his shoulders and resting on a long stick, and the other a monk standing at the door of a chapel with something in his hand resembling a lantern, as though he were guiding the saint across a river. By the bye, there is another piece of sculpture at Amboise which is likewise characteristically Flemish and which supports the belief that Charles really did draw upon Flanders when embellishing his castle ; it is a high relief representing a mounted knight giving alms to a poor man, and we saw it on a house side before crossing the Loire. Its family likeness to the Vision of St. Hubert is too striking to be merely a coincidence.

St. Hubert's Chapel, the buildings facing the Loire, and the famous towers which are provided with inclined planes instead of staircases, so gentle in their slope that carriages

can mount to the top without difficulty, were Charles' contribution to Amboise. He did not live to see the completion of the château. On April 7, 1498, whilst watching a game of tennis, he was struck down by apoplexy and died almost immediately.<sup>1</sup> Louis XII continued for five years to carry out his plans. And Francis, who, having spent part of his youth at Amboise, continued to live there during the early years of his reign, made such further additions to the castle as were needed to bring it practically to a finished state. At the beginning of 1516 he also had a little manor-house, situated not far from the castle and known as the Château de Cloux, put into thorough repair, ready for the arrival of Leonardo da Vinci, who, at the age of over sixty, had consented to leave his native country and place his genius as painter, engineer, and architect at the King's service. Leonardo, whom Francis allowed a salary of 700 écus, about £1400, was accompanied by a favourite pupil Francesco da Melzi. He had been in declining health (though his spirits were still those of a young man) for some time before

<sup>1</sup> The story of him having met his death by striking his head against the lintel of a doorway ornamented with a porcupine is incorrect.



leaving Italy, and he lived but three years after his arrival at Amboise. As the end drew near, his right hand became paralysed, so, on April 23, 1519, a week before his death, he summoned a notary, Maître Boreau, to the little house which he was accustomed to call a palace, and dictated his will. Although the practice of this Amboise lawyer was handed down from father to son until as late as 1885, Leonardo's original will was found to have disappeared from the notarial archives. Fortunately an authentic copy of the Italian text of this precious document, dating from the seventeenth century, was discovered some years ago. Among the painter's last requests were minute directions for his burial in the royal church of St. Florentin, which, prior to 1808, the date of its destruction, stood in the grounds of the Château of Amboise. He was accordingly buried in the cloisters, but exactly where is now unknown. Arsène Houssaye, one of the most prolific of French writers, claimed to have discovered the spot in 1863, when he made excavations on the site of the church, and even to have identified Leonardo's skull among a number of bones which were brought to light ; but there can be no doubt that he was mistaken, seeing that Vinci was

interred, as I have said, in the cloisters and not in the church itself. However, the poet and novelist was considered to have established a case strong enough to warrant the erection of a bust of Leonardo on the place where the remains were found, and these, enclosed in a lead box, were buried under the flagstones in St. Hubert's Chapel.

Before leaving Amboise we naturally did not fail to walk up the Rue Victor Hugo, and a few yards along the Rue du Clos-Lucé, to see the great painter's house, a pretty construction in red brick and stone which now bears the name of the Château of Clos-Lucé, and which, having undergone careful restoration, has much the appearance that it had in the days of Francis. Being a private residence, inexorably closed to the public, we did not visit its interior, which, however, would have had little interest for us, since, as I understand, it has undergone such changes as make it difficult to point out the room in which Leonardo passed away in the presence of his three devoted friends Melzi, Villaris, and Salai. Vasari states that he died in King Francis' arms, but that is a legend which modern historians have long since shown to be without foundation.

After the reign of Francis I, with its pleasant memories of Leonardo da Vinci, the Château of Amboise became the scene of one of those grim tragedies which have so often darkened the history of France. In 1560, under Francis II, a number of Huguenots and Catholics, who were discontented with the growing influence of the House of Guise, formed a conspiracy there with the object of seizing the Duke of Guise and his brother, and of removing the King from their power. The conspirators, whose leaders were the Prince of Condé and a nobleman of Périgord named La Renaudie, planned to get possession of the castle during the dinner-hour ; and they would most probably have succeeded but for the treachery of one of their number, a Paris advocate named d'Avenelles. To avert the danger, the Duke of Guise hid his troops in the forest and attacked the conspirators as they approached the château in small detachments. A large number of them were killed ; the others were captured to a man and reserved, without even a pretence of a trial, for the cruellest of tortures. Some were broken on the wheel ; others were hanged from the castle windows and from the iron balcony facing the Loire ; and others, again, were

drowned in the river. The most privileged among them were beheaded. And, whilst these daily massacres were in progress, the members of the House of Guise regarded them as a fitting after-dinner spectacle for the ladies, who, according to Régnier de la Planche, looked on from the windows of the château with apparently as little emotion as though they had been at the play.

As in the case of the Château of Blois after the murder of the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine, these tragic events were the signal, as it were, for the decadence of the Château of Amboise. Henceforth it ceased to play any important part in history. In the seventeenth century it was degraded to the level of a State prison, the most illustrious man to be enclosed within its walls being Nicolas Foucquet, that dishonest Superintendent of Finance of Louis XIV who, with his peculated millions, built the magnificent Château of Vaux, near Melun. In 1760 it became the property of the Duke of Choiseul; on his death it was bought by the Crown and resold for five million francs to the Duke of Penthièvre; and from his family it passed into the hands of that of Orleans. Confiscated by the French Govern-



AMBOISE: THE CASTLE COURTYARD AND GARDEN



THE MONUMENT TO LEONARDO DA VINCI AT AMBOISE



ment, it was again used as a prison, this time for Abd-el-Kader, the brave emir who offered such a stubborn resistance to the French in Algeria, and who, on being set free by Louis Napoleon on condition of his not returning to his native country, showed that he could keep his word better than his captors had done in 1847, when he was promised that if he surrendered he should be allowed to retire to Alexandria or St. Jean d'Acre. By means of a Bill passed in 1872, the Château of Amboise was restored to the House of Orleans, which, still possessing it, has turned it into an alms-house for the superannuated servants of the various branches of the family.

Of all the royal residences of the Loire no château has undergone so much mutilation as Amboise. The restoration of its exterior has, therefore, been the work of many years, and is, indeed, even now still far from complete. As regards its interior, the rooms have, of course, long since lost the decorations with which they were beautified by Charles' Italian artists ; and, since the task of restoring them to anything like their original appearance has been recognised as vain, they contain nothing worthy of special note. The beauties of Amboise are, in fact, purely external ones.

One thing in particular made us envy those old retainers who have found a home—and a right pleasant one it must be!—within its walls: the castle garden and grounds, which, at the height of summer, are resplendent with colour and abound with the most delightful shady spots. Near the monument to Leonardo da Vinci is a quincunx of lime trees under which we had a strong desire to linger. The branches are trained so as to meet at the top and form a roof of tender green, through which the sunlight, charging the atmosphere with colour, filtered in that subtle manner which the most skilful painters have sometimes had a difficulty in rendering, and, streaming through the leaves, formed a pattern on the ground of verdant light and shadow. However, the regret we felt on leaving this little avenue was soon effaced, for a few minutes later we were gazing on the view of the valley of the Loire from the battlements of the Tour des Minimes,—a view similar to that at Chaumont, and which, when seen by La Fontaine, drew from him the declaration that it was the most smiling and varied landscape he had ever looked upon.



## CHAPTER IV

### AT TOURS: DELICACIES AND DIVAGATIONS

THOUGH it may be true that quite a number of French provincial towns can justly boast of their superiority, in certain respects, to Tours, I hold that none can lay claim to such an aggregation of virtues as the ancient capital of Touraine. Yet, numerous and varied as its attractions are, they are not immediately apparent to the passing visitor ; and it was not until we had resided for some weeks within a short distance of this pleasant town, and had seen into how many categories it is possible to divide those who go there with specific objects in view, that we began to discover and appreciate all its good qualities. Take, for instance, the traveller, who represents the most important class of visitor, and whose principal desire is to see beautiful old buildings. Where will he find a town which has attained such a world-wide reputation as Tours, which,

as one of the oldest towns in France, has both numerous ancient constructions and a most interesting history? It is no less renowned, too, in the eyes of the epicure, to whom its name has become a synonym for certain toothsome viands called *rillettes* and *rillons*, which Balzac, who was a native of Tours,—he was born at 39 Rue Nationale, and his statue faces the Place du Palais-de-Justice, — describes in *Le Lys dans la Vallée* as “that brown preserve . . . that preparation so much esteemed by some *gourmets*,” and as “that residuum of pork fried in its own fat and resembling cooked truffles.” I once had occasion to hear a *gourmet*—he was also, let me add, a *vieil enfant de la Touraine*, which to a certain extent explains his enthusiasm—discourse for half an hour on the merits of this kind of potted meat and these brown nodules of ham; and he assured me, in concluding, that no dinner could be accounted complete unless it were preceded by one or other of these delicacies, and was washed down by the celebrated effervescing white wine of Vouvray, a village a few miles from Tours. Every bit as deep as the affection of the gastronome, though inspired by different considerations, is that of the English or

American mother with a daughter whose education requires the finishing touches putting to it. Tours and the suburbs are noted for their schools and *pensions*, where young ladies can acquire quite as pure French as is spoken in Paris,—and under infinitely healthier conditions. Easily distinguished by their dress and accent, they can be seen at all times of the year, under the care of a chaperone, gazing into the shop-windows or sitting in the tea-rooms of the animated Rue Nationale. During the summer and towards the hour of five o'clock, you will also frequently see in those much patronised afternoon resorts the Parisian lady of fashion, who knows that she can count on finding in Tours a less harassing round of social pleasures than she has had in the capital, and at the same time just as good society. Somewhat similarly, the man of business (by no means the last of those who turn their eyes longingly in the direction of this provincial town) jumps into his autocar and hastens there to escape for a spell from the stress of city life. Even the child has a good word to say for Tours, its barley-sugar, and its prunes.

We could not have hit on more delightful quarters : a vine-covered cottage in a district

of vineyards and orchards, on a hill above the Cher, which, as it approaches Tours from Bléré, flows into the valley of the Loire and soon joins its sister river. Behind the house was our garden, scented with many roses, ablaze with geraniums, shaded by fruit trees, and under the lee of a pine wood, whence, especially towards evening, a faint resinous odour was wafted on the breeze. There, in the sweet pure air, we took our meals, not forgetting to see that our table was furnished with the delicacies of Tours ; there we read Balzac and rested from the fatigue of our recent journeys.

It is the duty of every one who travels in Touraine to renew acquaintance with certain of the stories of the great novelist. They have an added interest when read amidst the natural beauties among which they were conceived and, in some cases, I believe, written ; even though the writer's descriptions of those beauties are not particularly striking, and his references to châteaux and localities be of little practical value. To follow once more the love story of Félix and Mme. de Mortsauf in *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, to sympathise afresh with the Abbé Birotteau in *Le Curé de Tours*, and to laugh for the hundredth time

over *Les Contes Drolatiques* is a most excellent method of putting you in tune with your surroundings. Though we got but slight topographical or historical information from these books, there was one noteworthy fact we gathered from one of them,—that Tours in Balzac's time must have been rather intellectually dull, and in other ways very different from the active, progressive town it is to-day. "It was then," he says, "one of the least literary towns in France;" whereas it is now an important centre for literary and antiquarian research, as witness one only of its learned societies, the Société Archéologique de la Touraine, the transactions of which are of the greatest value to those who are studying the history of the ancient province. As to its modern buildings, the one in which its inhabitants of seventy years ago apparently took the most pride was the bridge over the Loire, which Balzac calls "one of the finest monuments of French architecture." If you were to ask a Tourangeau of to-day to indicate the finest modern construction in his native town, this bridge would be the last thing he would think of; he would, in all probability, point out the new Hôtel de Ville, or the new basilica of Saint Martin, both imposing

buildings due to Laloux, an architect who is held in much honour for the double reason that he is a man of talent and a child of Tours.

Good, however, as the modern buildings are, the ancient ones far exceed them in interest, and on the occasions on which we dragged ourselves from our rose-garden on the hill our attention was devoted almost exclusively to the latter. Of these the most important is the Cathedral, dedicated to Saint Gatianus, the first Bishop of Tours, and built, on the ruins of a still older church, at various times between 1225 and 1547. The choir dates from the thirteenth, the transept from the fourteenth, and the nave from the fifteenth centuries. Its magnificent stained - glass windows, in a perfect state of preservation, also date from these centuries, according to their position, the finest being a series of fifteen in the topmost windows of the choir. The blues in these thirteenth century masterpieces are superbly rich, and give the impression rather of the colour of precious stones than that of glass. These windows and the white marble tomb of the children of Charles VIII and Anne of Brittany—a tomb fashioned in the Renaissance style, early in the sixteenth century, either by the brothers



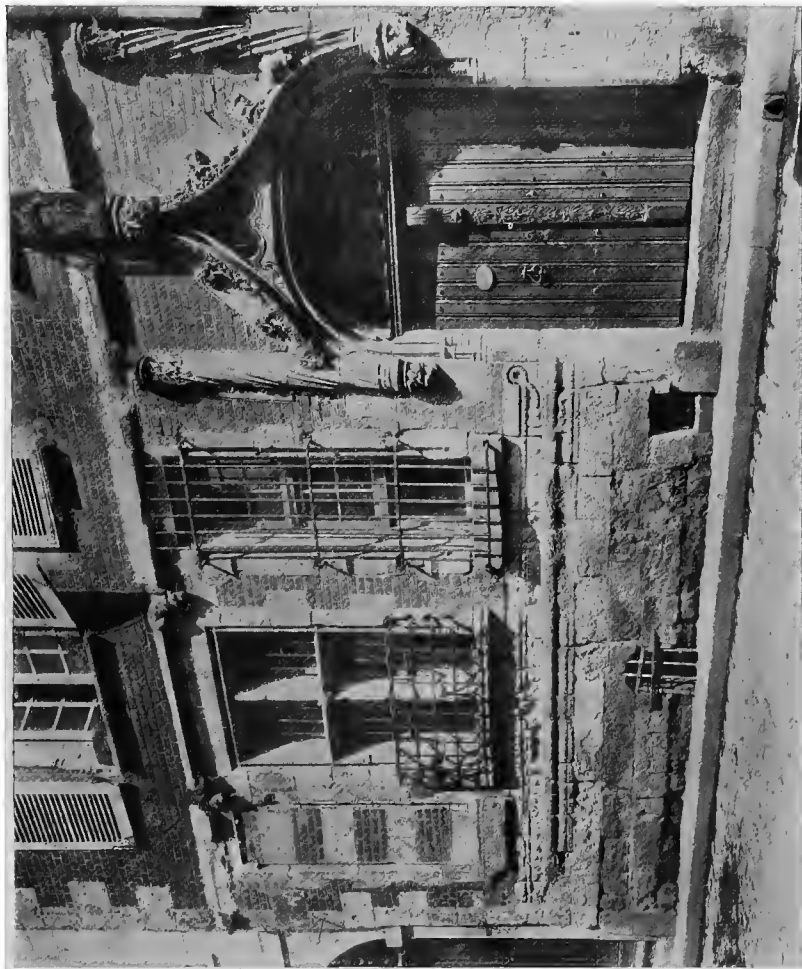
TOURS CATHEDRAL





Juste or under the direction of Michel Colombe—are the finest things to be seen in the interior. The principal façade, with its three large flamboyant doors and its slightly dissimilar towers, surmounted by octagonal storeys dating from the Renaissance, will also be found to be well worth several minutes' thoughtful inspection from a point of vantage on the little square above which it towers so nobly. Prior to the Revolution there existed in Tours a still larger and finer religious edifice than the Cathedral: an immense basilica which was built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries over the tomb of Saint Martin, whose body had been brought to Tours from Candès about the year 400. It was more than one hundred yards in length, over seventy yards in breadth, and nearly thirty yards in height. Like the celebrated Abbey of Cluny, in Paris, it was almost totally destroyed, early in the nineteenth century, to make way for a new street. The only portions remaining are two towers, the Tour de l'Horloge and the Tour Charlemagne, and a gallery of one of the cloisters, which can be seen in the courtyard of a religious establishment in the Rue Descartes. The towers, which have a most solitary appearance, rising from amidst

the houses, and which are so isolated that it seems impossible that they ever belonged to the same building, date, as I have said, from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; but the gallery of the cloister was built between 1508 and 1519 by Bastien François, the nephew of Michel Colombe. There are several other antiquated churches in Tours, but old houses and ancient châteaux being the principal object of our visit to Touraine, we did no more than peep into Saint Julien, Saint Saturnin, and Notre Dame la Riche, though that is no reason why you should follow our bad example. In the neighbourhood of Saint Saturnin, and in the tangle of narrow streets branching off from the Place Plumereau, we found many examples of fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth century houses, including a few with wooden fronts ornamented with roughly carved, naive statuettes. One of the most celebrated is a house of brick and stone in the Rue Briçonnet, which goes by the name of the House of Tristan l'Hermite, because some ignorant person, possibly in the days of Balzac, when he had not the opportunity of learning better, mistook the tassled rope of Anne of Brittany, with which a portion of the façade



“MAISON DE TRISTAN L'HERMITE” AT TOURS



is decorated, to be the emblem of Louis xi's hangman ! It was never, of course, in any way connected with that sinister Provost of the Marshals of France, and, indeed, was not built until the end of the fifteenth century, during the reign of Charles VIII. A still older house—it was built in 1440—is the Hôtel Gouin at 35 Rue de Commerce, in the same quarter. Its almost pure white stone façade, facing a courtyard opening on the street, is one mass of lovely arabesques, which present so fresh an appearance, thanks to careful restoration, that you might almost imagine they were carved but yesterday. Seeing these two buildings in rapid succession, it is hard not to regret that they did not fall into the hands of equally thoughtful owners, for the "Maison de Tristan," unfortunately, is in as dilapidated a condition as the Hôtel Gouin is well-preserved. Near the Church of Saint Julien, in the Rue Saint François de Paule, stands a third fine old house, the Hôtel de Semblançay, so called because it was built by Jacques de Beaune, Baron of Semblançay, the treasurer to Francis I, who was accused, it is difficult to say whether rightly or wrongly, of malversation, and hanged at Montfaucon on August 12, 1527.

Going farther afield, we spent the best part of one afternoon in visiting Plessis-les-Tours, where Louis XI, in 1463, built a château, the history of which has become inseparable from his name. But we met with a bitter disappointment there. All that now remains of the King's favourite residence is one wing in red brick and stone, and the splendid park which once surrounded it has been reduced to the area of a small market-garden. A meek, soft-voiced person, who undertook to be our guide, made a brave attempt to interest us in things which, even when viewed with a good deal of imagination, were incapable of creating a spark of enthusiasm. She led us to the summit of a small winding staircase to show us a view of a district which in no way resembled a park where royal hunting parties and royal interviews had once been held ; she showed us a dismantled room in which Louis, a victim of superstitious terrors, is said to have given up his last breath ; she took us into a so-called guardroom on the ground-floor, restored to something like its ancient appearance by the Tours doctor who owns the château, and containing nothing more interesting than some human bones found whilst opening up the moat ; she pointed out

the cramped cell in the grounds where Cardinal La Balue, confined in one of Louis' celebrated iron cages, is supposed to have pined for years ; and she told us ineffectual stories of subterranean passages which, again according to legend, communicated with the House of Tristan l'Hermite ! I am afraid she must have found us singularly unappreciative ; but, really, it was impossible to feel even moderately excited over such a poor substitute for the picture we had formed of the Château of Plessis-les-Tours. Had we had *Quentin Durward* with us I should have been inclined to have sat down, there and then, to read aloud certain passages of that stirring romance, in order to quicken our blood into its natural warmth, though I am fully aware that Scott's description of the castle is very exaggerated. "There were," he writes, "three external walls, battlemented and turreted from space to space, and at each angle, the second enclosure rising higher than the first, and being built so as to command the exterior defence in case it was won by the enemy ; and being again, in the same manner, itself commanded by the third and innermost barrier. Around the external wall . . . was sunk a ditch of about twenty feet in depth. . . . In front of the second

enclosure . . . there ran another fosse, and a third, both of the same unusual dimensions, was led between the second and the innermost enclosure. The verge, both of the outer and inner circuit of this triple moat, was strongly fenced with palisades of iron, serving the purpose of what are called *chevaux-de-frise* in modern fortification, the top of each pale being divided into a cluster of sharp spikes, which seemed to render any attempt to climb over an act of self-destruction. Far within the innermost enclosure arose the castle itself, containing buildings of different periods, crowded around, and united with the ancient and grim-looking donjon-keep, which was older than any of them, and which rose, like a black Ethiopian giant, high into the air, while the absence of any windows larger than shot-holes, irregularly disposed for defence, gave the spectator the same unpleasant feeling which we experience on looking at a blind man. The other buildings seemed scarcely better adapted for the purposes of comfort, for the windows opened to an inner and enclosed courtyard, so that the whole external front looked much more like that of a prison than a palace. The reigning king had even increased this effect; for, desirous that the



additions which he himself had made to the fortifications should be of a character not easily distinguished from the original building (for, like many jealous persons, he loved not that his suspicions should be observed), the darkest-coloured brick and freestone were employed, and soot mingled with the lime, so as to give the whole castle the same uniform tinge of extreme and rude antiquity." And the novelist adds, a few pages farther on, that the environs of the castle, with the exception of a single winding path leading to the portal, "were surrounded with every species of hidden pitfall, snare, and gin, to entrap the wretch who should venture thither without a guide"; and that the victims of Tristan l'Hermite were to be seen in the neighbourhood "hanging like grapes from every tree." Decidedly, the real Château of Plessis did not deserve to be painted in such black colours. One or two well-garnished gibbets there may have been, and it is quite possible that Louis protected certain parts of his grounds with caltraps, as he did at the Château des Forges, near Chinon; but the rest, like much that has been related about the King himself, is pure fiction. Francesco Florio, a contemporary historian, states that

Louis chose Plessis-les-Tours as a site for his residence because of its picturesqueness, so it is hardly likely he would disfigure its beauty in the various manners related by Scott. Indeed, far from being the grim castle depicted in *Quentin Durward*, Plessis-les-Tours was a most agreeable manor-house, surrounded by a park so beautiful that it was called "The Garden of France" (a description afterwards extended to the whole of Touraine), and enjoying a view from its windows of the wooded slopes of Saint Cyr and Joué. "It is built," says Léon Godefroy, in an account of a visit which he made there in 1638, "principally of brick, except one side which is constructed entirely of freestone, and furnished with many windows. It is covered all over with fleurs-de-lis, mingled with ermines and porcupines and crowned characters." Not even so much as this remained of its decoration about the middle of the eighteenth century, and the buildings still standing were of so little architectural importance that, in 1773, they were used as a reformatory. The Revolution was the signal for a further step in the degeneration of a once famous castle ; it was sold as national property, and whilst its buildings fell, little

by little, into ruins, its park was slowly transformed into the present malodorous district of piggeries and unsightly cottages. Never did a royal domain meet with a more unworthy end.

When returning to Tours our attention was drawn, near the Botanical Gardens, to a farm called La Rabaterie, a fifteenth century building which is believed to have had a close connection with the Château of Plessis. It was the manor-house of Olivier le Daim, the barber-minister of Louis XI. Scott describes him as "a little, pale, meagre man, whose black silk jerkin and hose, without either coat, cloak, or cassock, formed a dress ill qualified to set off to advantage a very ordinary person. . . . His visage was penetrating and quick, although he endeavoured to banish such expression from his features, by keeping his eyes fixed on the ground, while, with the stealthy and quiet pace of a cat, he seemed modestly rather to glide than to walk through the apartment." La Rabaterie is not very remarkable in itself, but should curiosity or a sense of duty take you to Plessis-les-Tours you may as well see it, if only to enable you to recall the novelist's vivid portrayal of its former owner.

On our next excursion we met with better fortune than that which attended our visit to Plessis. In fact, passing in review our various divagations around Tours, my recollections of the day spent at Vernou and the Château of Jallanges are the pleasantest I have to recall, partly, perhaps, because we passed so many interesting places on the way. The first was Saint Symphorien, principally noteworthy for the doorway of its sixteenth century church ; then came the ruins of the Abbey of Marmoutier, founded by Saint Martin ; then the Lantern of Rochecorbon, a curious observation tower dating from the fourteenth century ; and, finally, the village of Vouvray, the white wine of which is held in repute by all epicures from the simplest *bourgeois* of Tours to the Czar of Russia. But we did not allow its temptations to detain us there more than a quarter of an hour, anxious as we were to push on to Vernou, which is situated a mile or two farther on, in the valley of the Brenne. Vernou is a flourishing village of close upon two thousand inhabitants, and its history dates as far back as the days of Saint Perpet, who is said to have built the parish church about the year 480. The northern wall of the principal nave of the present building being

built of courses of small stones can well be given that date ; but other parts are more recent. The semicircular doorway, with its quaintly ornamented archivolts, resting on columns with sculptured capitals, belongs to the eleventh century, whilst other portions are attributable to the twelfth. Another proof of the great antiquity of Vernou is shown by the remains of a Gallo-Roman or Merovingian building which goes by the name of the Palace of Pepin the Short. Before leaving for Jallanges we also saw, on an open space to the right of the church, an ancient elm, several yards in circumference, and so decrepit that the village blacksmith has had to furnish it with iron girdles to prevent it from utterly collapsing. We found, on inquiry, that it was known as Sully's elm, because of the tradition that it was one of those trees which he planted in various parts of France in 1598 on the occasion of the publication of the Edict of Nantes. From within the decayed bole of this aged elm, a younger tree has shot up stout and strong, as though, with its fresh young branches, to protect its great-great-grandfather from the inclemencies of the weather, and at the same time to keep ever green the recollection of the edict which marked

the political reconciliation of Catholic and Protestant.

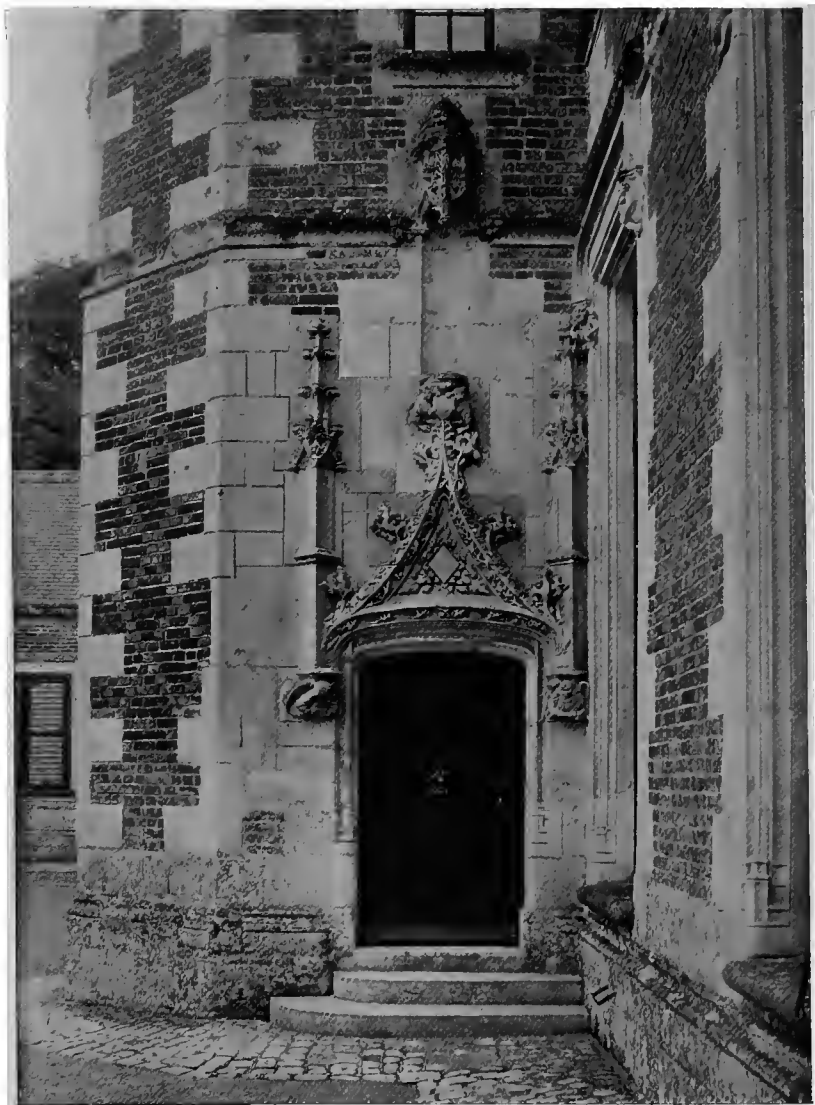
The Château of Jallanges lies at a distance of some three miles from Vernou in the midst of delightful grounds and a wood. Historically, the story of this sixteenth century manor-house in brick and stone is a very meagre one, since the records contain little else than a list of its owners. As a pleasant country residence, therefore, you must be content to regard it, getting what satisfaction is possible rather from its present than its past. The domain of Jallanges was in the possession of René du Perray, a knight-banneret, as far back as the thirteenth century ; but the first owner of the present château was Nicolas Gaudin, Treasurer to the Queen and Mayor of Tours, who possessed it from 1503 to 1510. In 1515 it was in the hands of Guillaume Barthélemy, Comptroller of Finances for Brittany, and from him it passed, during the next hundred years or so, to various owners, whose names need not be specially mentioned. The next owner of importance was Denis le Royer, a counsellor of the Parliament of Paris, who held it, however, only three years, from 1640 to 1643, when it became the property of Jean de Mons, the



THE CHÂTEAU OF JALLANGES



THE BILLIARD-ROOM AT JALLANGES



CHÂTEAU OF JALLANGES: A SCULPTURED DOORWAY



King's Secretary. Then, in 1648, came René Peyrat, the King's Steward, in whose family it remained for twenty-six years. Nicolas Lefebvre, a counsellor of the Parliament of Brittany, came into possession, in fact, in 1672 ; and for more than one hundred years the château remained in the hands of members of his family, the last one to possess it being Pierre Claude Lefebvre de la Falluère, who, on the 9th of Floreal, in the Year VI, had the sorrow of seeing it sold by the nation. The owners of more modern times include members of the Salleyx, Bizemont, Contades, and Meignan families. The château was restored by Count Jules de Contades, and the present owner is M. J. Meignan.

The most decorative façade of the château is that facing the courtyard. Built, as I have said above, of brick and stone, a highly pleasing combination, its ornamental effect is increased still more by a diapered pattern of diamonds formed by the use of bricks of different shades of red. Simple though these means are, they suffice, with hardly any other adjunct, to produce an admirable result, and one experiences no sense of loss from the fact that sculpture has been sparingly used. Leaving out of account its crocketed gables and

dormer-windows, and the carved grotesques on each side of the upper portion of the other windows, its only really noteworthy piece of work is the sculptured doorway of the tower which, situated in the middle of the façade, contains the staircase leading to the various storeys of the building. The front of the other side of the house is decidedly less ornamental, but it has an advantage over the former in its outlook: a view of a tennis-court and park-land, framed between magnificent cedars.

Apart from the contents of the Château of Jallanges, its interior, which I suspect has undergone many changes since the sixteenth century, calls for little mention. Indeed, but two things particularly attracted our attention: the painted ceiling in the billiard-room, and an exquisitely carved mantelpiece of hard, fine-grained stone in one of the bedrooms. But on the subject of the furniture, tapestries, and other works of art with which M. Meignan has embellished his country home, many pages might be written if it entered into the scope of this book to describe them.

The pleasing memories of that excursion to Vernou and Jallanges formed a fitting con-

clusion to our sojourn at Tours, which we left, only a few days later,—though not without a tinge of regret as we bade farewell to our cottage,—in order to continue our journey down the Loire.

## CHAPTER V

### DOWN THE LOIRE: AT LUYNES, CINQ-MARS, AND LANGEAIS

A FEW miles from Tours, in a hollow sheltered by the wooded, vine-clad hillside which skirts the right bank of the river as far as St. Patrice, lies the village of Luynes. Neither more nor less picturesque than many another Loire-side village which possesses old houses and rock-dwellings, I do not think we should have lingered there whilst on our way to Langeais, where we had an appointment to visit one of the most important of the châteaux of Touraine, but for the fact that a grim-looking castle of the very type associated with feudal times towered on a hill above steep, narrow streets and an ancient wooden market. It was a clear sunny morning, after a night of rain, with cumulus clouds scudding in a fresh breeze across a deep blue sky; and as the rays of the sun enveloped the castle's pepper-caster towers

and its ivy-covered base the picture was indeed alluring. So we descended into the village and, near a quaint market-place, mounted towards the castle by means of several flights of steps cut in the hillside. This unusual approach—it is even more novel than that at Amboise — traverses former defensive works, and leads, almost in a straight line, to the entrance of the château. There, a bridge crosses the remains of a moat, overgrown with shrubs and grass and weeds ; and a few steps farther, through an ever wide-open portal, brings one into the courtyard, or, more strictly speaking, castle garden. Viewed from this point, the Château of Luynes presents a less aggressive appearance than it does from below, and it then becomes obvious that it was built at two different periods. The fortress-like towers frowning on the valley of the Loire date, in fact, from the fifteenth century, whereas the portion in brick and stone belongs to the more ornamental and elegant period of the Renaissance.

Luynes did not always bear the name it does to-day ; at the end of the eleventh century it was called Maillé. Moreover, at that time, also, a castle stood on the hill and

commanded the valley. But, strong though it was, it was finally taken and destroyed by one of the counts of Anjou, who, according to the charter which mentions the exploit, devastated the whole country. However, the position was too good strategically to remain unoccupied for very long, and about 1106 Hardouin of Maillé, who was the first to bear that title, built a second fortress, which, in its turn, was supplanted by the present castle. The change in name dates from 1619, when Charles Albert of Luynes, Keeper of the Seals under Louis XIII, purchased the château and began its enlargement and restoration. Since then it has never left the possession of his descendants. But they can, I imagine, have got little satisfaction out of it, apart from the feeling of pride which a family property engenders. It is ill-suited for a residence, and, though we were told in the village that the present Duke of Luynes is having its rooms restored and put into a fit state for habitation, it is hardly likely that he will pass more than a few weeks there each year during the shooting season. The interior, we found, was closed to visitors, so, without any regrets, we turned our attention to what is to be

seen in the courtyard and, above all, to the fine view of the valley and the river which can be obtained from a little terrace to the left, near an ancient well, and from the summit of the massive northern and eastern walls of the castle.

Little more than half-way between Luynes and Langeais stand two other ancient buildings which likewise must not be overlooked by those who travel along the banks of the Loire. The more interesting is the Pile of Cinq-Mars, a solid square tower thirty yards in height, and varying in breadth from five and a half yards at its base to four and a half yards at its summit. At what date and for what purpose this curious construction was erected is a problem which has been discussed by archæologists for nearly a century, but without finding a solution, though the general belief is that the Pile is of Roman origin, and that it commemorates some long since forgotten event in Roman history. The other building is the castle of the same name, or rather its remains,—two cylindrical towers and portions of a huge wall. It was formerly the ancestral home of Henri Coëffier de Ruzé, that young favourite of Louis XIII who had the temerity to conspire against

Richelieu, and who, as a result, was beheaded at Lyons on September 12, 1642. Alfred de Vigny made him the hero of a novel, which should have an interest for you, if only for the reason that it was inspired by Scott's historical romances. The Castle of Cinq-Mars, which was dismantled by Richelieu, must at one time have been a formidable stronghold, judging by its stout towers and splendid military position, which is very similar to that of Luynes. It is now put to the most peaceful of uses. A little colony of houses has clustered around its base; its sides have been utilised by the vine-growers and small farmers of the village as a convenient support for sheds and store-houses; and the interior of its grounds has been transformed into fruit gardens.

Once more on the road, through a district of vineyards and orchards and rich pasture-land, diversified, now and then, by a landscape in which tall poplars were the dominating feature, we soon came within sight of the dark slate roofs of the Château of Langeais. A cluster of gray houses with narrow winding streets nestles at the base of a number of small hills, intersected with wooded gorges, through one of the deepest and most





LANGEAIS FROM THE BANKS OF THE LOIRE



picturesque of which babbles the little river Roumer. In the midst of the village and on a hillock which entirely dominates it, rise the massive towers of the château, with its conical slate roofs and machicolated cornice. The huge structure is gray and severe, as becomes a building constructed for defence, and it commands an admirable position overlooking the plain, through which the Loire—a former natural protection against the enemy—flows on its stately course. Fresh from visiting Blois, or any other castle of Touraine distinguished by the richness of its ornamentation, you may be disappointed on first seeing the Château of Langeais. But the impression will not be a lasting one, thoughtful consideration of this masterpiece of military architecture of the fifteenth century soon convincing you that it has a special beauty of its own. In its simplicity and severity there is an air of majesty which no other château of this part of France possesses.

Crossing the drawbridge at the main entrance in the Rue Gambetta, we found ourselves in the courtyard of the castle and face to face with the imposing ruins of a donjon, the history of which is closely

connected with that of Langeais and its château. It was built in 984 by Count Fulk of Anjou, surnamed the Black Falcon, whose portrait has been so admirably drawn by J. R. Green in his *History of the English People*. "Fulk Nerra, Fulk the Black," he writes, "is the greatest of the Angevins, the first in whom we can trace the marked type of character which their house was to preserve with a fatal constancy through two hundred years. He was without natural affection. In his youth he burned a wife at the stake, and legend told how he led her to her doom decked out in her gayest attire. In his old age he waged his bitterest war against his son, and exacted from him when vanquished a humiliation which men reserved for the deadliest of their foes. 'You are conquered, you are conquered!' shouted the old man in fierce exultation, as Geoffrey, bridled and saddled like a beast of burden, crawled for pardon to his father's feet. In Fulk first appeared the low type of superstition which startled even superstitious ages in the early Plantagenets. Robber as he was of church lands, and contemptuous of ecclesiastical censures, the fear of the judgment drove Fulk to the Holy Sepulchre. Barefoot, and with the stroke of the scourge falling heavily

on his shoulders, the Count had himself dragged by a halter through the streets of Jerusalem, and courted the doom of martyrdom by his wild outbursts of penitence. He rewarded the fidelity of Hubert of Le Mans, whose aid saved him from utter ruin, by entrapping him into captivity and robbing him of his lands. He secured the terrified friendship of the French King by dispatching twelve assassins to cut down before his eyes the minister who had troubled it. Familiar as the age was with treason and rapine and blood, it recoiled from the cool cynicism of his crimes, and believed the wrath of Heaven to have been revealed against the union of the worst forms of evil in Fulk the Black. But neither the wrath of Heaven nor the curses of men broke with a single mishap the fifty years of his success. . . . Cool-headed, clear-sighted, quick to resolve, quicker to strike, Fulk's career was one long series of victories over his rivals. He was a consummate general, and he had the gift of personal bravery which was denied to some of his greatest descendants. To these qualities of the warrior he added a power of political organisation, a capacity for far-reaching combinations, a faculty of statesmanship, which became the heritage of the

Angevins, and lifted them as high above the intellectual level of the rulers of their time as their shameless wickedness degraded them below the level of man." Constructed of courses of stone in the Gallo-Roman style, so much admired by archæologists, Fulk's fortress was one of several advanced strongholds which he built when planning the conquest of Touraine, and additional traces of his defences can still, here and there, be found in the park which stretches at its feet.

The park also contains the perfectly preserved foundations of a twelfth century basilica, which, under the name of the Chapel of Our Saviour, was built by that Count of Anjou and Touraine—Fulk v, surnamed the Younger—who took part in the First Crusade and married Millicent, daughter of Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem, whom he was to succeed. On his return to Langeais he brought back certain relics from the Holy Sepulchre and the Saviour's manger, and it was to hold these that he built this basilica within the enceinte of the fortress. Its foundation was the object of a donative charter which he signed in 1118.

But, apart from this important event in the religious annals of Langeais, there is another and equally good reason for mentioning Fulk v.

His son married Matilda, daughter of Henry I, King of England, and their children were Geoffrey and Henry Plantagenet, the latter of whom became King of England, and who was the father of Richard the Lion-Hearted, who in his turn was King of England, Count of Touraine, and Lord of Langeais.

After the murder of Arthur of Brittany, in 1203, and the consequent confiscation of John Lackland's possessions, the Langeais fortress became Crown property, though it was many times granted to private individuals as a reward for services to the King. Among these, during the thirteenth century, the most picturesque figure is undoubtedly that of Pierre de la Brosse, who raised himself from the position of barber-surgeon to that of Prime Minister. Louis IX presented him with Fulk's fortress, and he made great improvements to it. His humble birth and the extraordinary favour in which he was held by the King greatly excited the jealousy of the nobility, who sought his ruin. Continuing their feud during the reign of Philip the Bold, the King's second wife, Mary of Brabant, and her friends accused him of holding treasonable intercourse with the King of Castille, who was then at war with France. Philip paid little heed to the accusa-

tion, but Pierre de la Brosse did, and waited for an opportunity to lodge a counter-complaint. The King's son, by his former wife, dying shortly afterwards, Pierre de la Brosse dropped a hint that the Queen might have poisoned her stepson. This was quite in accordance with the spirit of the times, and so also was the means which the King took to discover the Queen's guilt or innocence. In a nunnery, in a distant part of France, lived a nun who was supposed to possess the gift of prophecy, and two envoys—one of whom was a relative, and the other a friend of de la Brosse—were sent to lay the matter before her, and ask her opinion. It is said that they tried to bribe her to proclaim the Queen guilty; but she was too shrewd to imperil her professional reputation as a soothsayer, so replied in one of those ambiguous phrases which have been favoured by all oracles since the days of Delphi. The King read it as a proof of the Queen's innocence, and remembering the former charge against Pierre de la Brosse, condemned him to death. He was hanged at Montfaucon, outside Paris, on June 30, 1278.

From that time until 1466 there were only governors, or castellans, at Langeais. Mean-



while, however, the steady invasion of Touraine by the English brought about the capture of the castle in 1427, and it was not until the days of Joan of Arc that the province was definitely freed from the foreign yoke.

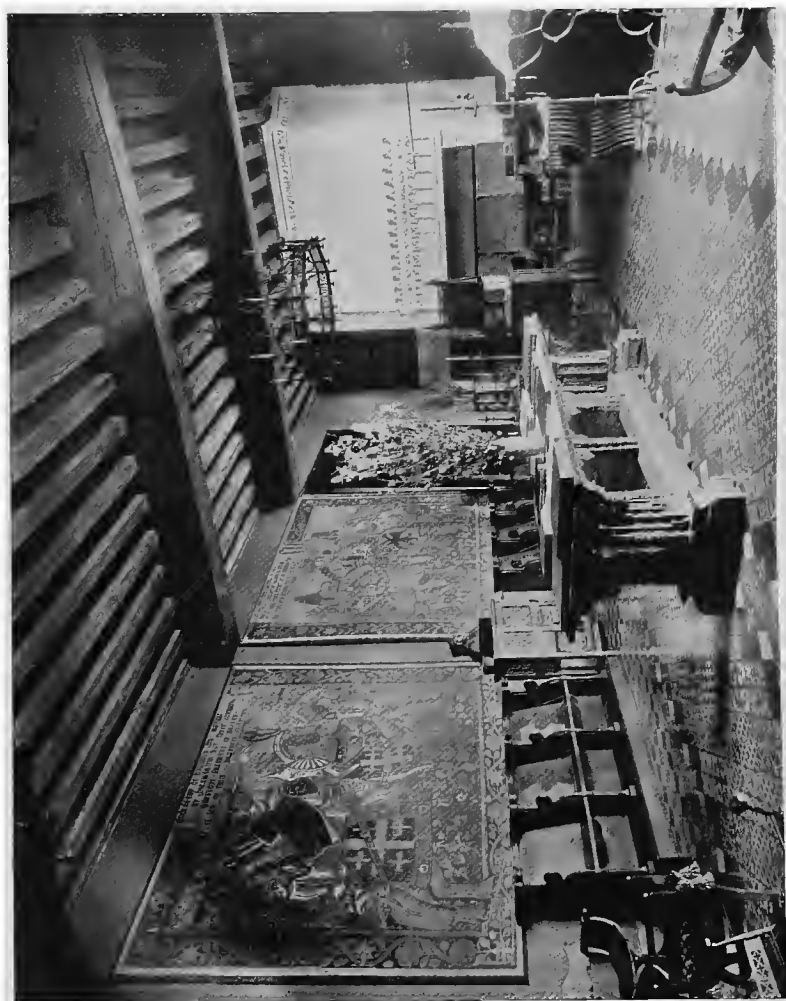
As soon as Charles VII had rid himself of the English, he turned his attention to the interior organisation of his kingdom, and it is a noteworthy fact that Langeais, in April 1453, when he issued a decree calling upon the law officers of the Crown to draw up the "Customs, Ways, and Usages of Touraine," was chosen by him as their meeting-place. This great work was not completed until 1461.

It was about this time, in the early years of the reign of Louis XI, that the building of the present château was commenced, on the King's behalf, by Jean Bourré, his Comptroller of Finances for Normandy. If a bad man, and in some senses not a good King, Louis thoroughly understood the art of kingcraft. In the wars with the barons in his early days, he had learned by experience the value of a powerful castle at a critical juncture, for it was to the Castle of Montlhéry, near Paris, that he owed his throne if not his life. Like Fulk the Black, he was a good strategist, and

saw the value of the position of Langeais, and that a strong castle there, held by a retainer in whom he could trust implicitly, would, in a great measure, protect him from all attacks coming from the west, when he was in Touraine. His choice of the man who superintended the construction of the château was, too, a good one ; for Jean Bourré, who was an earnest lover of art, especially when it was displayed in the form of fine houses, had had much experience in the building of châteaux. It is recorded by one who was almost his contemporary that he “erected and constructed many fine castles and pleasure houses, such as Langès, Longué, Jarzé, Vaulz, Couldray, and Antrammes, near Laval.” Some, such as Langeais, were for the King ; others, as the Château of Plessis-du-Vent, which was begun the year after Langeais and approached completion in 1472, were for himself. In building the Château of Langeais he saw that the work was carried out not only with rapidity, which explains the remarkable unity in the style of its architecture, but also with great thoroughness. The materials used—notably the chestnut woodwork—were excellent in quality, and have so well resisted the effects of time that the château is to-day



LANGEAIS: FAÇADE FACING THE COURTYARD



LANGEAIS: ANNE OF BRITTANY'S ROOM

certainly one of the finest examples of the military architecture of the Middle Ages in existence.

In placing the château opposite the castle of Fulk the Black, says the Abbé Bossebœuf, who is our principal authority on the subject of Langeais and its ancient buildings, it was the architect's intention to connect them by two fortified lines crowning the hill's double escarpment. He first of all built the fortress, properly so called, consisting of a *corps de logis*, stretching from north to south, and flanked by two towers on the side facing the street, with a drawbridge protected by an outer wall. To the north the ramparts rose perpendicularly above the moat, and in a southerly direction the building was terminated, as was usually the case, by a wall four yards in thickness. The château proper was then constructed, towards the south, a third round tower, similar in dimensions to the others, being placed at the far corner. The building was continued at right angles in a westerly direction. The château was defended by a magnificent way of the rounds, one hundred and forty-two yards six inches long, and from thirty-nine and a half inches to fifty-one and a half inches in breadth, with two hundred and seventy

machicolations. The façade facing the courtyard did not require to be so strongly fortified, and therefore was unprovided with either round towers or a *chemin de ronde*. Notwithstanding the somewhat irregular manner in which the two parts of the château were joined, this façade, with its three hexagonal towers which serve as staircases, its finely sculptured doorways, ornamented with superb wrought-iron knockers, and its mullioned windows with carved stems and other decorative details, presents a most harmonious appearance. The middle portion of the château is composed of four storeys containing numerous bedrooms ; the right wing, on the other hand, has only three, and contains the large halls. There are three series of windows, arranged symmetrically one above the other, the narrow ones having transoms and the others, which are nearly two yards in breadth, both transoms and mullions. The right wing, which lies east and west, has a somewhat unfinished appearance, owing to the fact, which was brought to light by recent excavations, that it was formerly terminated by a chapel destroyed during the Revolution.

With the names of the principal owners of the Chateau of Langeais history has dealt

kindly. But there is one name which it has failed to hand down—that of its architect. The accounts, containing details of expenditure and the names of workmen engaged in its construction, have been lost. Of its very early history, therefore, little more is known than that it was commenced about 1465, in which year Bourré was granted letters patent of nobility and the Captaincy of Langeais, and that the accounts were kept by Jean Briçonnet, the King's treasurer, who lived in a small house in the Rue de la Longue-Echelle. Unknown though its architect is, however, it is certain his work had an important influence on the architecture of the early part of the reign of Louis XI. The Château of Plessis-du-Vent bears a rather striking resemblance to that of Langeais, and there can be no doubt that both castles were planned by the same architect. Jean Bourré was evidently satisfied with the way he had done his work at Langeais, so employed him to draw up the plans of his own château. Coudray-Montpensier and Rigny-Ussé, not to mention other châteaux in various parts of France, also bear traces of the movement which was inaugurated by the man employed by Louis' favourite.

Jean Bourré resigned the Captaincy of Langeais several years before his death, which occurred shortly after 1505, and the château then came into the possession of princes of the royal blood. Its interior decoration was completed by the son of the celebrated Bastard of Orleans, Francis of Orleans, Count of Danois and Longueville, who, by letters given at Montargis on July 2, 1466, obtained the domain from Louis XI, and who is credited with the construction of two of the castle's finest mantelpieces. These, which are in the large halls on the ground-floor and first-floor, are beautifully ornamented, in one case with extremely naive heads quaintly placed in the crenelles of a miniature battlement, and a sculptured design of vine and holly ; in the other with blind Gothic arcades and a trefoil decoration.

From the family of the princes of Orleans the château passed into that of the princes of Bourbon. On the marriage of Louis of Bourbon to Joan of France, Louis XI's natural daughter by Marguerite de Sassenage, he received "the fortress and château of Langeais," in March 1473, as a dowry. But he does not appear to have left on the castle any mark of his presence. On the other hand, the



finest parts of the parish church are due to him : the steeple, which is one of the most remarkable in Touraine, and the Gothic sacristy with its vaulted roof and prismatic mouldings on the central pendentive of which is his escutcheon—three fleurs-de-lis, or, field azure, baton gules.

The time was now drawing near when the Château of Langeais was to be the scene of the event which, amongst all others in its varied history, has made it famous : the marriage of Charles VIII and Anne of Brittany, in 1491. When a child, Charles had been engaged to Margaret of Austria, the daughter of Maximilian, Emperor of Germany ; whilst Maximilian had been betrothed by proxy to Anne. But Anne of Beaujeu, the daughter of Louis XI, who acted as Regent during Charles' minority, forthwith began to use the great political skill which she had inherited from her astute father. According to Brantôme, " Charles having perceived that it was not well to have so powerful a lord within his kingdom, deprived Maximilian of the said Anne and married her." In spite of the opposition which the Duchess of Brittany at first showed to the marriage, the affair was carried out with such cleverness,

and troops were advanced on her possessions with such timeliness, that she consented to become Queen of France.

Accompanied by Arthur of Montauban, Bishop of Bordeaux, and Chancellor of Brittany, the Sire de Coëtquen, and John III of Pontbriant, Anne arrived at Langeais "in a travelling dress of cloth and velvet, trimmed with a hundred and thirty-nine sable skins," and on a palfrey adorned with three ells of crimson velvet. She was pretty—or at least had the beauty of youth, and Brantôme describes her black eyes and well-marked eyebrows, long black hair, fresh complexion, and dimpled chin ; and the only defect he noticed was that one leg was a trifle shorter than the other, which he is careful to add is hardly a defect at all, for it was also the case with many "beauteous and virtuous dames" with whom he was acquainted. Her wedding gown displayed a rare magnificence ; it was made of cloth of gold, embroidered with gold, and trimmed with one hundred and sixty sable skins, and cost a sum of money which, even in these days of expensive dress, would be regarded with astonishment.

The marriage contract, which was drawn up by Pierre Bonneau, the Apostolic notary,

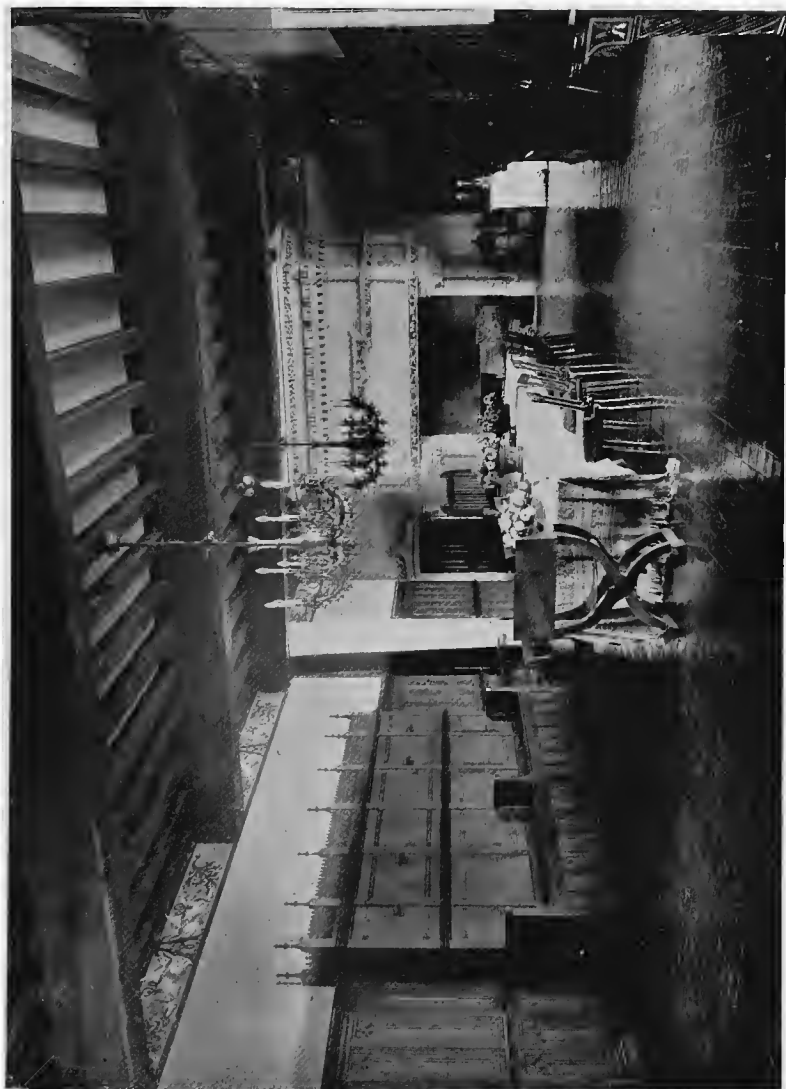
and Guy Leclerc, the crown notary, was signed in the room of the château now known as the Salle de Anne de Bretagne. Its principal clauses stipulated the reunion of Brittany to France, and, in order to make this doubly sure, the obligation on the part of the Queen, should the King die without issue, to marry his successor,—a strange condition which was actually carried out. The nuptial benediction was pronounced by the Bishop of Angers, it is believed in the chapel which once terminated the south-west wing of the château ; and in the presence of the Duke of Orleans,—the future Louis XII and her second husband,—the Prince of Orange, the Duke of Bourbon, the Count of Angoulême, the Count of Foy, the Count of Vendôme, and William of Rochefort, Chancellor of France. The bridegroom, then in his twentieth year, was, the chronicler tells us, “short, sickly looking, and extremely thin,” but nevertheless had a “handsome, gentle, and agreeable face.” As to the date of the ceremony, it was performed in December, but historians are not quite agreed as to the exact day, which was probably the thirteenth of the month. Whether this was an unlucky day, or whether, as Brantôme

thinks, the betrothal with Maximilian was really binding, and ought not to have been ignored in the off-hand fashion it was, the union of Charles and Anne was not fortunate. All her children died young, and she was left a widow in less than seven years. Dunois, who was one of the principal parties in arranging the match, fell dead from his horse in a fit of apoplexy, a few months after the wedding. On the other hand, there was an important set-off against these personal troubles in the fact that Brittany became henceforth a part of France, and an end was put to the wars which had long devastated both countries.

A rapid review of the next three centuries will now adequately cover the history of Langeais. First of all, I think you must consider as a legend the assertion that the château, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, belonged to Cardinal du Bellay, the friend and protector of Rabelais. The Du Bellay family owned the Château of Langey, in the department of Eure-et-Loir, and not that of Langeais. Moreover, the charming "Maison de Rabelais," which is opposite the castle, cannot, strictly speaking, have been inhabited by the immortal writer, though it

is quite possible he may have visited it. By letters patent dated September 16, 1547, Henry II gave the lordship of Langeais, in return for services, to the Duke of Somma, one of the favourites of Francis I. Charles IX received hospitality there on November 19, 1565. Louis XIII, descending the Loire to Saumur, landed at the port of Langeais in October 1627, dined at the château, and, according to the report of an eye-witness, Dr. Herouard, who never left him, "undressed at nine o'clock, got into bed at half-past nine, prayed, and then slept until six in the morning." About this time the castle, which up to then had been in the possession of but temporary owners, definitely ceased to belong to the Crown, and Louise of Lorraine, the daughter of the celebrated Duke of Guise, became its absolute owner in 1631. But she sold it soon afterwards for 59,300 livres to Antoine Coëffier de Ruzé, Marquis of Effiat, Baron of Cinq-Mars and Superintendent of Finances, whose son Henry I have already mentioned. One of the lords of Langeais whose name throws the most glory on the château during the second half of the seventeenth century is the Duke of Mazarin, in whom the Cardinal found so

many good qualities that he gave him his name and his niece, Hortense Mancini, with a dowry of twenty-eight million livres. In 1765, the Effiat family sold the castle and its grounds to Baron de Champchevrier for 27,000 livres ; but in the following year Marie Charles Albert, Duke of Luynes, obtained letters patent authorising him to exercise the right of feudal repurchase. His son, Duke Louis Joseph, remained owner of the castle during the entire revolutionary period, and to him is due its preservation, the only concessions he consented to make being the removal of the coats of arms which ornamented some of the chimney-pieces, and the destruction of the chapel. He sold the château in 1798 to M. Charles Moisant, of Tours, for 170,000 francs. The new owner, however, took no care whatever of it ; indeed, he left it in such a state of abandonment that some of the villagers used it as a place for storing their wood and drying their clothes, whilst others, with a view to economy in building, constructed their houses against the château. As to the park, they divided it into sixty plots, which they planted with vines. And the municipality itself could find nothing better to do than to transform the



THE GUARDROOM AT LANGEAIS



THE SALON DES FLEURS AT LANGEAIS



large room on the ground-floor into a stable for the gendarmes !

Such was the lamentable state of this fine old castle in 1833 when M. Christophe Baron, a Paris lawyer, was struck, whilst on his way to Nantes, by its beauty and its admirable position. He decided to purchase it. But it was not until April 22, 1839, that he was able to accomplish his desire. From that year dates the château's new lease of life. Practical man of the world that he was, and endowed, withal, with a keen sense of humour, he inaugurated his ownership by two most original measures. He informed the owners of the houses abutting on the château that he was disposed to purchase them for triple their value if evacuated the first year, for double their value the year following, and for their exact value the third year. But if, at the end of three years, they had not accepted his proposal, he intended to set the law in motion and turn them out without paying a penny. The result was that he obtained almost all the houses at their market value, for the majority of their owners—peasant like—stubbornly insisted on remaining where they were until the very last moment. As to the holders of the vineyards in the park,

he called a meeting of them one Sunday afternoon. A notary read a deed of sale offering them twice the value, but containing a final clause stipulating that the sixty owners should be unanimous in accepting the offer. Left to themselves, the peasant-proprietors began to discuss the matter. Calm at first, the meeting soon became noisy ; then the sound of blows was heard, followed by cries ; and, finally, it was in a perfect uproar. However, towards evening they had come to a mutual understanding and the sixty signatures were affixed on the agreement. Meanwhile, M. Baron, whose hobby was archæology, began to restore the château ; and, though his taste and knowledge may not always have been applied to the best purpose, lovers of the old castles of Touraine are under a debt of gratitude to him for aiding in the preservation of so fine a piece of architecture.

To others, wealthier and more competent, was reserved the task—nearly thirty years after M. Baron's death—of bringing the Château of Langeais to its present splendid state. During our many wanderings in Touraine we never met with a finer example of skilful restoration, and I doubt if it would be

possible to find a more convincing one anywhere. Mr. Henry James, in his book of impressions entitled, *A Little Tour in France*, says that the apartments of the Château of Langeais, "though they contain many curious odds and ends of antiquity, are not of first-rate interest." But that was written over twenty years ago, in the days of white-washed walls and deal flooring, and since then the interior of the castle, as regards furnishing and mural decoration, has undergone a complete transformation. Since then the Château of Langeais has come into the possession of M. Jacques Siegfried, a wealthy man of commerce, inspired with a love of ancient art, and he has so changed it, with the collaboration of Madame Siegfried, an equally enthusiastic lover of the past, that the fifteenth century lives again in its ancient rooms. On purchasing the property in 1886, he found that, although the exterior was in a very fair state of preservation, many alterations had to be made before it could be said to present the aspect it had in the fifteenth century. Certain errors in restoration, dating from the time of M. Baron's ownership, had to be corrected. Details in the architecture of the roof were changed, and an anachronism in the form of

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a blue clock face was removed. There was not an old plan, ancient document, or book describing the château's appearance in 1465 which M. Lucien Roy did not seek out and study ; and whilst this well-known architect was engaged on the architectural side of restoration, a number of eminent artists and collectors were giving their assistance in restoring the thirty halls and rooms of the . . . . . castle to their ancient splendour. The former white-washed walls were covered by M. Charles Lameire with beautiful decorative paintings, done by the encaustic process, and inspired by fifteenth century tapestries and the designs in the *Book of Hours* of Anne of Brittany, a copy of which is in the château. MM. Bonnaffé, Foulc, Emile Peyre, and Spitzer, well-known collectors, aided M. Siegfried in ransacking the archives of large public libraries in search of useful facts, in copying old documents containing details of interior decoration, and in making purchases at sales even in the most distant parts of the country. No genuine specimen of fifteenth and sixteenth century work was too unimportant to be let slip, if it made a fitting addition to the Langeais collections. One class of antique, however, was debarred by

M. Siegfried: nothing that he purchased had any connection with warfare.

In an exceedingly pleasant room on the ground-floor, called the Salon des Fleurs, our attention was attracted by a very effective piece of mural decoration by M. Lameire, representing mallow flowers and upright branches of cherries; and in the magnificent guardroom we noticed a frieze by the same artist, composed of the arms of Anne of Brittany interwoven with her motto: *POTIUS MORI QUAM FŒDARI*. These arms, which are repeated around the room, are accompanied by figures of greyhounds with collars and ermined *mouchoirs*. The mural decoration in these two rooms may be taken as an example of the conscientious work of restoration which has been accomplished throughout the château. Appropriateness is the note which you meet on every side. Take the case, for instance, of the beautiful tiled floors, all of which were specially made for the château, and at what an expenditure may be imagined when I say that the tiling of no two rooms is alike.

Another of the glories of Langeais is its furniture. This can be divided into two classes: genuine fifteenth century work and copies from ancient models. As far as possible,

M. and Madame Siegfried have endeavoured to find authentic pieces ; but when neither love nor money could obtain them they had first-rate copies made from examples in museums. For instance, an extremely beautiful cupboard with finely wrought metal ornamentations in the guardroom is a copy from an ancient locker in the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, in Paris ; but the two stalls on the opposite side of the same room are genuine fifteenth century work. The latter, which were formerly in the Church of Argues-la-Bataille, are superbly proportioned, and the carving of their backs and canopies is a masterpiece of execution. Other beautifully carved stalls and seats are also to be seen in the Salle des Gardes, the Salle de Anne de Bretagne, and the Salon des Fleurs. In the last-named room, by the bye, is a curious fire-screen, painted in grey camaïeu, which was formerly in the possession of Louise of Vaudemont, the wife of Henry III. It formed part of the furniture in the mourning-room (*chambre de deuil*) occupied by the widowed Queen at the Château of Chenonceaux, of which she was the owner.

The Château of Langeais also contains a good selection of cabinets and chests. In one

of its many charming bedrooms is a particularly fine example of a fifteenth century *bahut*, and in the same room are several other authentic specimens of works of that period, notably a Spanish torch-holder, a fragment of German tapestry, representing a person riding on horseback, and a virgin in gilded wood of French workmanship ; whilst in another bedroom are two Italian chests ornamented with paintings and bearing the arms of the Chigi family.

As regards the beds, the division into genuine antiques and copies still holds good. I noticed, however, that most of them are specimens of thirteenth century work,—a deviation from the rule to furnish the château in the style of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which has its advantages from an æsthetic point of view, the beds of the fifteenth century being cumbersome and not over pretty, whereas those of the thirteenth were small and elegant. “The beds of this period,” says Viollet-le-Duc, “were habitually composed of a sort of balustrade placed on four feet, with an opening in the middle of one of the sides to enable the person wishing to sleep to slip between the clothes without effort. These beds were low,—the height of

a sofa. The sleeper's head was raised by several pillows placed one on the top of another." Metal had been completely abandoned in favour of wood in their manufacture. As to decoration, this is clearly shown in many ancient documents, and the carving and even colouring of thirteenth century beds can be reproduced with almost scrupulous accuracy. One of those at Langeais is, indeed, a copy of a bed illustrated and described by Viollet-le-Duc, who in turn copied it from a thirteenth century manuscript, in the National Library, containing the *Histoire de Saint Græl* and other stories translated from the Latin. Hangings and testers were often of great richness and beauty, and frequently bore symbolical emblems, such as those which are to be seen at Langeais: "Potius mori quam fœdari," "Spera in Deo," "Post tenebras spera lucem," "Prye à cant d'oiseau," "A vaillant (cœur) rien impossible." We noticed, too, that their curtains were tucked up in accordance with ancient custom.

Equally as important as the furniture, if not more so, are the tapestries, which add so much to the richness of colouring of the château's interior. The first to attract our attention were two belonging to a series depicting the

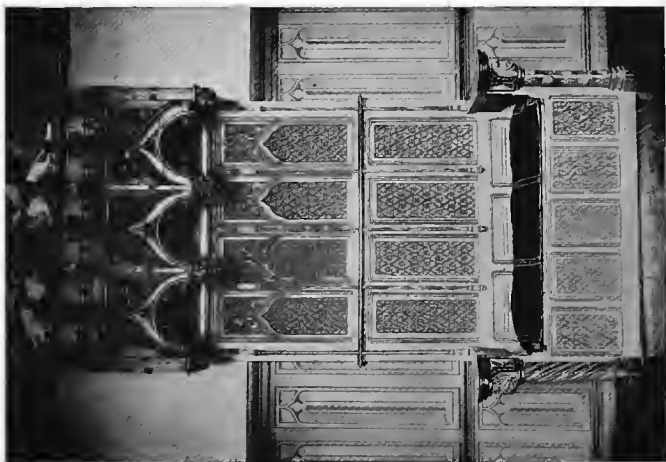




A TYPICAL BEDROOM AT LANGEAIS



A PORTION OF THE WAY OF THE ROUNDS AT LANGEAIS



FIFTEENTH CENTURY STALL AT LANGEAIS

“Story of the Holy Sacrament.” These valuable works were purchased by M. Siegfried in October 1888 at the sale of tapestries at the Château of Plessis-Macé, in the department of Maine-et-Loire, and they originally came from the ancient Abbey of Ronceray, at Angers. On this Benedictine church being despoiled at the time of the Revolution, they found their way to the neighbouring Church of the Trinity, which sold them to the Château of Serrant, whence they passed to that of Plessis-Macé. The complete series was composed of eleven pieces, in which the Sacrament was regarded from a triple point of view : its figures in the Old Testament, its institution, and the miracles it had occasioned in the Church. The first and the last are at Langeais. Where they were made is unknown, but for whom is clearly shown by the first of the series, since it bears the initials and arms of Isabelle de la Jaille, who was Lady Superior of the Abbey of Ronceray from 1505 to 1518. They were given by Louise Leroux, then *doyenne* of that religious house. M. Siegfried also owns the first panel of the “Story of Saint Saturninus,” dated 1527, one of a series of eight tapestries which have an interesting history. Benoît de la Grandière, in a

note to one of the last chapters of his *Histoire des Maires de Tours*, speaks of them as having been made for Jean Duval and as existing in the Church of Saint Saturnin at Tours in 1780. They were given to that church by Jacques de Beaune-Semblançay, whose house at Tours has been mentioned in the preceding chapter. On the outbreak of the Revolution these beautiful tapestries disappeared, and were thought to have been destroyed. Some forty years ago, however, three of the most important of the series were found in the possession of a second-hand furniture dealer, who sold them to the chapter of the Angers Cathedral. A little over ten years ago a fourth was discovered in the hands of another dealer, in the Rue de Vaugirard, in Paris, and after figuring in the Tours Exhibition of 1891, was bought by M. Siegfried. It represents St. John preaching before a numerous audience, some seated and others standing, including St. Saturninus, who is recognisable by his aureole. The Gothic tapestry in the same room, representing Christ on the cross, the Virgin Mary, and St. John, dates from the fifteenth century and was once in the collection of M. Goupil. But assuredly the most curious of the tapestries at the Château of Langeais are the series known

as the "Neuf Preux." "Preux" is an old French word meaning "Hero," and the nine heroes were Joshua, David, Hector, Cæsar, Artus, Godfrey of Bouillon, Judas Maccabeus, Alexander, and Charlemagne. Only the first six (and a fragment) of these are represented in the Langeais series. Each hero is the subject of a quatrain, the portrait of Julius Cæsar, for instance, being accompanied by the following lines :

"Julius Cesar fort renommé je suis  
Qui le fier Pompée ay vaincu et occis  
Et en mes jours empereur de romme fuz  
Six centz ans devant que fut ne jesus."<sup>1</sup>

In the opinion of Mgr. Barbier de Montault, who has written an exhaustive treatise on these tapestries, they were made between 1525 and 1540 in La Marche, which possessed two tapestry manufactories. Before coming into M. Siegfried's possession they were the property of M. Reversé, of Saint Maixent, who purchased them, together with the Château Chauray, from a M. de Surimeau. Nothing more is known of the history of six

<sup>1</sup> "I am the much renowned Julius Cæsar  
Who conquered and killed proud Pompey,  
And I was once Emperor of Rome  
Six hundred years before Christ was born."

of the most curious tapestries in the world. In addition to these principal works are others, notably an interesting panel entitled "*Les Travaux et les plaisirs des Champs*," and another called the "*Tapisserie des Paons*," representing a balustrade with peacocks on a background of Gothic thistles.

Though exceptionally well off for tapestries, the Château of Langeais is rather sparsely provided with pictures. But those that are there are of the best. One of the bedrooms is made glorious by the rich colouring and Lombardian grace of a fresco by Bernardino Luini, dated 1422, which came from a chapel in Locarno ; in the Salle de Anne de Bretagne are contemporary portraits of Charles VIII and Anne,—two of the very portraits, attached by hinges, so as to fold, face to face, and bearing on the back the royal initial K (Karolus), which were presented by the King to one of his wedding-guests ; and in the same room is a Magdalen, by Henner,—the only modern painting I noticed,—which is accounted one of the painter's finest works.

Multitudinous art treasures are thus to be seen on every side. Not the least interesting are the examples of wrought-iron work. Here, again, the owner of the château has

been faithful to the ideal with which he set out when he commenced the work of restoration. The beautiful knockers on the doors in the courtyard have already been mentioned, but I would once more draw attention to them, as well as to the decorative bolts with which these fine old doors are studded. At the corners of the hexagonal towers in the courtyard are two interesting torch-holders, but these, unlike the locks and bolts on the inner doors, are also scrupulously accurate copies of fifteenth century models. In the Salle de Anne de Bretagne are two admirable candelabra, copied from a picture by Albert Durer ; and on each side of a doorway at the end of the guardroom are two most elegant Italian tripod stands for holding braziers. There are several examples of old locks, two particularly beautiful ones detached, but most of them fixed on ancient pieces of furniture. Finally, a word should be said for the massive iron firedogs which support huge logs of wood in the broad fireplaces. Those in the guardroom came from the former Château of Chanteloup, and one of another pair was discovered in the Langeais grounds, where it had lain hidden for centuries.

We had a double satisfaction in looking

at the art treasures stored at Langeais, for to the pleasure which they evoked was added the joy of knowing that they cannot be dispersed. Anxious that the result of twenty years' patient work should be preserved, the owner has followed the example of the Duc d'Aumale in the case of Chantilly, and presented the castle and its collections to the Institute of France, on the condition, naturally, that he and his wife retain the usufruct during their lives. In so doing, they hope not only to prevent the castle from passing into the hands of others who might close it to the public, but also that their collections will in the future form the nucleus for a still richer museum of fifteenth and sixteenth century art. In addition to this generous donation, M. Siegfried has deposited in the hands of trustees a sum of money sufficient to produce an income of £500 to pay for repairs and other annual expenses which may be incurred in connection with the arrangement of the contents of the castle as a public museum. What a sense of gladness must be felt by the connoisseur who knows that his precious collections will be enjoyed in perpetuity,—that thousands upon thousands will, like himself, be carried back by them to



ancient days ! Verily the stamp of feudal times is on everything in this wonderful château, and he who, walking through its rooms with timbered ceilings, or sitting in its quaint stone window-seats, could not transport himself for a time to the days of Louis xi and Charles viii and Anne of Brittany would indeed be a person of little imagination.

## CHAPTER VI

### DOWN THE LOIRE: AT ST. PATRICE AND PORT BOULET

“ I AM positively dying to see the Metsus,” said my enthusiastic companion as we travelled along the dusty road towards St. Patrice and the Château of Rochecotte. “ You know how fond I am of Metsu, with his wonderful finish, his simply exquisite rendering of the texture of a silken gown.”

“ Well, we ought not to be long in arriving now,” I replied. “ Since leaving Langeais I have counted four kilometre posts, so but three more separate you and your favourite pictures. I warrant, too, that your patience will be rewarded by the sight of at least one work by that other beloved painter of yours, Gerard Dow. But of course *all* the best Dutch artists of the seventeenth century will be represented in the Rochecotte collection. Wasn't I told that it contained the pick of



THE CHÂTEAU DE ROCHECOTTE



the masterpieces which belonged to the princes of Courland?"

"Really? How splendid! In that case I know I shall not be the only one to go into raptures. I well recollect your idolatry of Albert Cuyp and of certain Meuse landscapes of his which we saw together years ago; and I have not forgotten how you quoted Walter Pater to me on the subject of those 'blond' masterpieces. Unless my memory betrays me, you said that he had developed 'the latent gold in Rembrandt,' and 'brought into his native Dordrecht a heavy wealth of sunshine.' And what about your old admiration of Ruysdael's forest scenes, Adrian van Ostade's cottage interiors, Hobbema's subtle studies of light, and Franz Hals' harmonies in gray and silver? I myself shall enjoy Ruysdael and Hobbema, after I have finished with Metsu and Dow. But look!—surely those are the first houses of the village?—Yes; I thought so. Then we cannot be far from the château now."

Either we had covered the ground with unwonted celerity, or, my attention being diverted by riverside beauties, I had miscounted the kilometres. At all events, as we swept round a bend in the road, there

we were at St. Patrice and directly opposite the ornamental wrought-iron gates of the Château of Rochecotte. A long, straight, and rather neglected avenue led us up the wooded hillside under the lee of which the village stands; and on almost reaching the top we caught sight, between the trees on our right, of the château, a plain and yet distinctly elegant seventeenth century building, placed at a point where the eye can take in an admirable view of the valley of the Loire, with Ussé and other châteaux plainly visible on a clear day. Approaching a columned and escutcheoned entrance, shaded by an ancient fir tree, I had a premonition of disappointment on seeing the closed shutters of the white sunlit façade. Were we going to find that the Dutch treasures were inexorably guarded against the public eye? Certainly it looked very much like it, since we rang the bell again and again without receiving an answer. At last, when it became evident that the mansion was unoccupied, I set off on a journey of exploration amongst some adjoining outbuildings, and there, received by the fierce barking of a watchdog, I found the caretaker. Yes; the family was away, said this respectful, aged man; but if

we liked he would willingly show us over the château, though he feared it contained little to interest us. That last observation of his made us profoundly pity him, for it was clear he could not be a lover of Dutch art. After the opening of many doors and shutters, he feebly led the way from room to room. This—a room occupying the entire ground-floor of the right wing of the château—was the drawing-room, the portraits on the walls being those of members of the Castellane family; here, to the left of the vestibule, was the library, filling two exceedingly inviting apartments; and the room adjoining was the *salle-à-manger*, with more family portraits on the walls. On the way to the first-floor he drew our attention to the wrought-iron balustrade of the staircase, remarking, “On ne fait pas des choses si bien aujourd’hui : la main-d’œuvre est trop chère,” and pointing out that the portraits on the landing were those of Madame de Sévigné and her daughter, the former of whom, in 1669, had married François de Castellane, Comte de Grignan. He next took us into a succession of bedrooms opening on to an old-fashioned corridor, hung with more portraits of Castellanes, and then, partly

retracing our steps and mounting another staircase, into a little gallery to view the interior of the chapel. For some unexplained reason he showed a particular fondness for this chapel, and he enjoined us to see its exterior, which he pronounced, in the reverential tone of voice of an old retainer, to be "très bel et digne d'une grande famille." Not wishing to hurt his feelings we complied, though I fancied I heard my companion, as we followed him outside, heave a little sigh on drawing away from her favourite painters of *genre*. There was some compensation, however, in finding that our *cicerone* was very well informed about this chapel with profusely decorated façade, which, by the bye, is badly in need of restoration. It had been built, he said, by the Duchesse de Dino, in memory of her uncle, Monseigneur le Prince de Talleyrand, who had frequently come over from the Château of Valençay to spend the summer with her at Rochecotte, and its site was that of the very bedroom he had occupied. Talleyrand having made her his heiress, she had come into possession of his papers, including those curious memoirs which he had heard had aroused so much curiosity

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THE LIBRARY AT ROCHE COTTE



ROCHECOTTE : THE CHÂTEAU CHAPEL

and discussion,—memoirs which, unfortunately, she had not seen published, since she died on September 29, 1862, six years before the date fixed for their publication. So it was well she had had the satisfaction of raising this monument to his name. When it was evident that he had finished his story, I ventured to suggest that we should return to the house to continue our visit. That was as monsieur and madame pleased, he replied, but there only remained the second-floor, and that, he felt sure, would hardly interest them.

“But we have not seen the pictures!” I exclaimed, a growing suspicion coming over me.

“What pictures, Monsieur, s’il vous plaît?”

“Why, the Dutch pictures, of course; those of the famous Courland collection.”

“Ah, Monsieur, now I understand,” sadly responded the old servant. “Alas, Monsieur, they were taken away a long time ago. And as to what has become of them I am not quite certain; but I believe they were divided among members of the family.”

The caretaker had gone to close the château. Opposite the chapel and under a shady *pergola*,

overgrown with Virginia creeper, we walked and mused, my companion declaring that this was even a greater disappointment than that we had experienced at the Château of Plessisles-Tours. Whilst fully agreeing, I did my best to persuade her that this was one of the unavoidable *contretemps* of travel, to be met in that philosophic spirit which all travellers acquire sooner or later. The casket, it was true, had been found empty. But did it not possess a beauty of its own, apart from what it had once contained? Moreover, Rochecotte had a history; and were not historical recollections—indestructible and irremovable—almost as precious as works of art? Among its associations, for instance, was as romantic a story as had ever been penned by novelist. Since she had never heard it, there could be no more appropriate place than this for its recital. And thus it happened that, seated within the cool shade of the bower, I related the life of the Chouan, Fortuné Guyon, Count of Rochecotte.

“Fortuné Guyon or Guillon, as the name is spelt in some records, came of a family which had owned the Château of Rochecotte since the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1700 its owner was Marie Dublineau, the

wife of René Guyon, who was the Treasurer of France attached to the financial department of Tours ; in 1763 it was in the possession of Louis François Marie Guyon, and about the time to which I am particularly referring it had passed by inheritance into the hands of our hero's father, who, by virtue of letters patent, signed at Versailles in January 1767, was Marquis of Rochecotte. The Marquis, who was also Baron de Colombiers and Seigneur de Boizai and de Vogue, had been a brilliant officer in the Orleans cavalry regiment, and at the time of his son's birth, in 1769, had retired to his château on an income of close upon £2000.

“ At an early age Fortuné, whose education during boyhood was entrusted to his father's chaplain, showed himself an apt scholar, and at the same time an adept in all outdoor exercises, especially those of hunting and riding, which he was allowed to practise to his heart's content in the extensive grounds that still surround this château. He likewise had a predilection for arms, and already when a mere boy had decided—greatly influenced, naturally, by the Marquis—to follow his father's old profession. At the conclusion of his studies in Paris, the Duc de Châtelet, who

had come to take a great interest in his welfare, suggested that he should join the King's infantry regiment, of which he was colonel. Fortuné Guyon, then only seventeen years of age, immediately accepted the offer, and, without losing time by first of all going home, posted straight to Nancy, where his regiment was in garrison. Some two years elapsed before he again saw his father and sister,—and then only for a few weeks. The signs that France was on the eve of Revolution were becoming more and more frequent, making it imperative that every soldier should be at his post. So the young officer, bitter at heart, and feeling, as he embraced his father, that he might never see him again, dragged himself away from Rochecotte. The storm broke soon after his departure. The meeting of the National Assembly, the fall of the Bastille, the women's march to Versailles, and the Feast of Pikes followed in rapid succession. Then, in August and September 1790, came disaffection in the army, the mutiny of certain regiments, and the Nancy massacre, the news of which, to use Carlyle's words, went 'pealing through all France, awakening, in town and village, in clubroom, messroom, to the utmost borders, some mimic reflex or

imaginative repetition of the business, always with the angry questionable assertion: 'It was right. It was wrong.' But the news of the Nancy catastrophe brought in its train more than that: it killed the Marquis of Rochecotte.

"Shortly before hearing of his father's death, Fortuné's regiment had been disbanded and a large number of his fellow-officers had already fled the country. He himself decided to follow their example, and in March 1791 did so, in company with a young nobleman of Touraine, though not until he had once more returned to the Château of Rochecotte to visit his father's grave and make final arrangements for his sister's safety. Proceeding to Oberkirch, in Germany, in the states of Cardinal Prince Louis de Rohan, of diamond necklace fame, he and other royalists formed a company of cavalry which, under the orders of the Prince de Condé, fought with great bravery during the whole of the war against the new masters of France. It soon, however, became evident to Fortuné Guyon that, if the régime was to be overthrown, it could only be done by continuing hostilities in the very heart of the country itself; so he determined to return home and

throw in his lot with the royalist insurgents of the Vendée or with the Chouans of western France. Accordingly, in May 1795, he set off in disguise, accompanied by Comte Théodore de Bourmont, the Prince de Condé's aide-de-camp. On reaching Sammarçoles, near Loudun, Guyon heard that Charette, the royalist leader on whom he was relying for assistance, had made peace with the Republican party, and that Stofflet, another prominent leader, was about to sign a similar treaty. Therefore, whilst Comte de Bourmont went into Brittany, he himself made for Tours. Passing along the banks of the Loire, he could not resist the temptation of visiting the ancestral home. But as he approached the château he almost failed to recognise it, so many changes had it undergone during his four years' absence. Seeing a peasant standing near, he asked him what had happened. 'The old Marquis of Rochecotte is dead, Monsieur,' replied the countryman, 'and his son is an *émigré*. Everything has been sold, and the new owner has pulled down half of the château to pay for the remainder. But I can tell you, Monsieur, he's not at all easy-minded in his new house, for he has a mortal dread of royalists. In fact, he's no confidence in the treaty they've just



signed. And there, in my opinion, he's not far wrong, for it's said they'll soon take up arms again. But I dare say you yourself know all about that, since you've doubtless fought against them and know their qualities?' Encouraged by the prospect of renewing hostilities against those who had robbed him of his property, Fortuné Guyon hastened to Poitiers, where one of his uncles, an ardent royalist named M. d'Ormans, lived; and from that time dates the extraordinary activity which he showed throughout his life as an insurgent leader in the ancient provinces of Maine and Touraine.

"Inspired by the insurrectional methods adopted by the Royalist Agency in Paris, numerous secret societies, the members of which called themselves such names as 'Fidèles' and 'Philanthropes,' sprang into existence through his initiative in the districts of Mans, Tours, and Poitiers. He put himself into touch with the rebel organisation which had been formed at Sillé-le-Guillaume by L'Hermite and Geslin, two well-known Chouans. He accompanied his friend De Bourmont and another royalist named Vaugiraud to the Belleville camp to attempt to bring about a reconciliation between Stofflet

and Charette, who now regarded each other as rivals ; and he took part in a fruitless attempt to secure for Stofflet part of the ammunition which had been furnished by England to the other Vendée chief. And, finally, in order to create a diversion from the insurrection in the Vendée, he dashed hither and thither in the Sarthe and in the Loir-et-Cher, inciting the inhabitants of the Cantons of Château-du-Loir, Villedieu, and Montoire to revolt. It was on the occasion of one of the numerous engagements which he and his men had at this time with the soldiers of old General Chalbos, who was in command of the Republican forces at Tours, that there occurred one of the many romances of which his life was composed. Wounded near Vallon, his followers carried him to the Château de Rouillon, not far from Mans, where they knew he would receive every care at the hands of its occupants, Madame de Rouillon and her friend the Vicomtesse de D——. The latter, indeed, was one of the most devoted of nurses to Fortuné Guyon, who showed his gratitude by ‘covering with kisses the pretty hands which tended him.’ Nor did her devotion to him cease after his recovery and departure. At the end of July

1796, when Guyon was in Paris on revolutionary business, the charming Viscountess and her friend, seized with a desire to play at being rebels, set off for Mans, and, little suspecting that they were watched by the police, occupied the hiding-places which he had contrived in his flat in that town. News of the escapade came to Fortuné's ears through one of his trusty agents, and he promptly ordered his two friends to return to their château. Whilst deprecating the running of unnecessary risks, he was, however, by no means averse from the most dangerous enterprises, provided that the cause he had at heart stood a chance of being benefited; and but a year after the occurrence I have just mentioned he had an opportunity of putting the Vicomtesse de D——'s nerve and affection to a severe test. He sent her on a secret mission to England to see Monsieur and get him to forbid J. de Puisaye, another of the royalist leaders, to trespass on his command in Maine. On her return, accompanied by Mademoiselle Guyon, who passed as her *femme de chambre*, the two ladies were arrested at Boulogne. But the intrepid Viscountess was quite equal to the emergency: she managed to escape from

prison disguised in masculine dress, leaving her 'maid,' who was shortly afterwards liberated, to follow her.

"The Count of Rochecotte's quarrel with De Puisaye led to him making a special journey, shortly after the 18th of Fructidor Year V, to Blankenburg, where he obtained from Louis XVIII more extensive authority over the royalist forces than he had hitherto had,—probably his rival's post as commander-in-chief of the insurgents of the west of France. But, in order to replace De Puisaye at all effectually, something more was needed,—the pecuniary assistance of England; and to secure that it was necessary to do some signal service to that country. So he set to work to organise the escape from prison of Commodore Sidney Smith, who, on April 19, 1796, had been captured at Havre, in company with a Breton nobleman, Jacques Jean Marie François de Tromelin, and imprisoned in the Temple. The undertaking was one which necessitated the greatest coolness and daring, but, aided by a number of other royalists — Hyde de Neuville, Phélippeaux, Carlos Sourdat, a dancer named Boisgirard, Madame de Tromelin, and others, all of whom daily risked their lives—it met

with entire success. Whilst Guyon and some of his friends, armed and disguised, laid in wait near the entrance to the prison, ready, if necessary, to use force, others, dressed as Republican soldiers and provided with a forged document ordering Sir Sidney Smith's removal to the Fontainebleau prison, presented themselves to the Temple authorities and, without much difficulty, had the prisoner handed over to them. Once outside, Sir Sidney Smith was hurried off to a safe hiding-place and thence on the road to Havre and home. Not until a fortnight later, and almost at the very time that the Commodore was being enthusiastically received in London, did the French discover that he had escaped !

“After so brilliant a service as this, Fortuné Guyon might well have expected to receive substantial recognition from the Court of St. James’, and he would, in all probability, have attained his object through Sir Sidney Smith’s influence had the fates but ordained it. But he did not even receive the gift of five hundred pounds which the grateful Commodore (who forgot not a single one of his rescuers) sent him. On June 29, 1798, he was betrayed to the police by a Vendée officer,

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Richard Duplessis, whom he had formerly made a Knight of St. Louis.

“Seated within the shadow of this château, which its one time owner was never to see again, except in memory, I can call up every detail of the tragic struggle which took place when he was arrested on the Pont Royal in Paris. The first officer to seize him received a fatal poniard thrust; the second a less dangerous wound; the third was killed on the spot. Running in the direction of the Rue de Bac, followed by a number of citizens, Guyon made a vain attempt to escape. ‘I am an *émigré*!—not a thief!’ he shouted again and again. But the gathering crowd, as he made another dash for life, would not let him go; they brought him to the ground with any missiles they could lay their hands on, and thus, bleeding and half-unconscious, gave him up to the police.

“Though the Count of Rochecotte persisted, in his declarations, in saying that his name was Ulric Néméré, of the department of Puy-de-Dôme, his identity was conclusively proved by Duplessis’ evidence, for the traitor pointed out the scar of the wound his benefactor had received near Vollon; and so, shortly afterwards, he was condemned to



death, and—in spite of the Vicomtesse de D——’s efforts to rescue him—shot on the Champ-de-Mars. His loss to the royalist party was irreparable. Many *émigrés* in London henceforth despaired of the re-establishment of the monarchy, and Prince Auguste, on hearing that he was dead, paid a touching tribute to his many admirable qualities.”

“A most interesting story !” exclaimed my companion, when I had finished. “I am glad now we came to Rochecotte; your little romance has quite compensated for the loss of those pictures. I only wish you could promise to connect such a one with every château we visit. I wonder what we shall find at Réaux? And now, *en route* !”

The Château of Réaux stands at Port-Boulet, a few miles farther down the Loire. There, the widening out of the river, whose volume has been increased by the waters of the Indre, becomes more and more apparent; it has now definitely lost that appearance of inoffensiveness which is its most marked characteristic some thirty miles upstream; and the country in the immediate neighbourhood of its banks being wilder and more deserted it has the aspect, in miniature, of one of the broad,

swift-flowing water-courses of the New World. Réaux, which was once called Plessis-Rideau or Plessis-Macé, was built in 1462 by Jean Briçonnet, a King's Councillor, President of the Court of Accounts in Paris, and Mayor of Tours; and it replaced a strongly fortified castle of which little is known save the name. After remaining for nearly two centuries in the Briçonnet family, it was sold, about 1650, by the builder's great-grandson, François de la Beraudière, Marquis de l'Isle-Rouche, to Gédéon Tallemant, who obtained letters patent authorising him to call it the Château of Réaux.

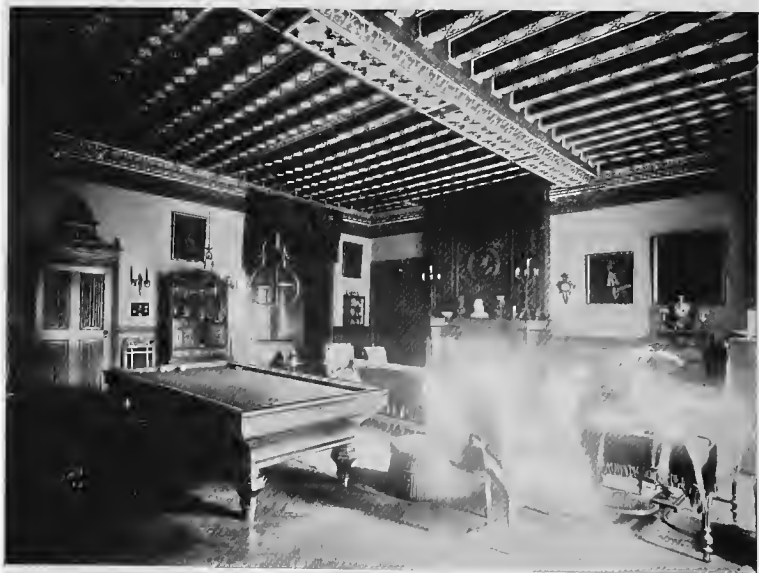
Of all the owners of this delightful manor-house in dark red brick and stone, arranged in a symmetrical pattern,—one of the most decorative, with its framework of greenery and its background of trees, in Touraine,—Tallemant des Réaux, as he was henceforth called, has reflected most glory upon it. He was the eldest son by a second wife of Pierre Tallemant, a man of considerable wealth, and he was born at La Rochelle on November 7, 1619. Like most of the well-to-do young men of the seventeenth century, he travelled in Italy at an early age, and on returning to Paris took his degree



A VIEW OF RÉAUX FROM THE GROUNDS



ENTRANCE TO THE CHÂTEAU DE RÉAUX



THE DRAWING-ROOM

in civil and canonical law, with a view to entering the magistracy, in accordance with his father's wishes. But feeling no inclination for such a career, and finding that his father would allow him very little money, Gédéon married, in 1646, a wealthy cousin, Elizabeth de Rambouillet, the daughter of Nicolas de Rambouillet, his mother's brother. Relieved from further anxiety over worldly affairs, he spent the remainder of his life (he died on November 10, 1692) in the pursuit of letters, in appearing in fashionable society, and in looking after the welfare of his family. He was an assiduous frequenter of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, that famous rendezvous of Parisian literature and fashion at 15 Rue St. Thomas du Louvre, a street now long since demolished ; and he thus came into close contact with all the most celebrated people of the day. "A friend of the Marquise de Rambouillet," says his biographer, M. Monmerqué, "he was surrounded by the most illustrious members of the nobility and the most renowned men and women of letters. He saw this lady—she who was so rightly celebrated, she who was related to two Queens, Catherine and Mary of Medici—in the midst of her noble family, the d'Angennes,

—in so many ways remarkable ; he saw her visited by Madame la Princesse, by Mademoiselle de Bourbon, who afterwards became the Duchesse de Longueville, and by the heroes of Rocroy ; and he met at her house the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, Vicomtesse d'Auchy, Madame de Sablé, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Madame de Sévigné, Voiture, and that untamed lioness Mademoiselle Paulet, Vauglas, Malherbe, Racan, the two Corneilles, Mairet, Bensserade, Chapelain, Godeau, Huet, Menage, Gombauld, and, in short, everybody of note." No more favourable place for studying the fashionable society of the seventeenth century could have been found than this great Parisian house, so Tallemant des Réaux set to work to make the most of his opportunities, to keep his eyes and ears ever open, and to put upon paper whatever he saw or heard of interest. He collected there numerous stories of Cardinal Richelieu, Ninon de l'Enclos, and Marion de l'Orme ; he wrote down the anecdotes he had been told or the impressions he had obtained at the Marquise de Sévigné's, at Mademoiselle de Scudéry's, at the Comtesse de Maure's, or at Madame de Choisy's ; he tellingly described financial circles and that rich middle-class world whence

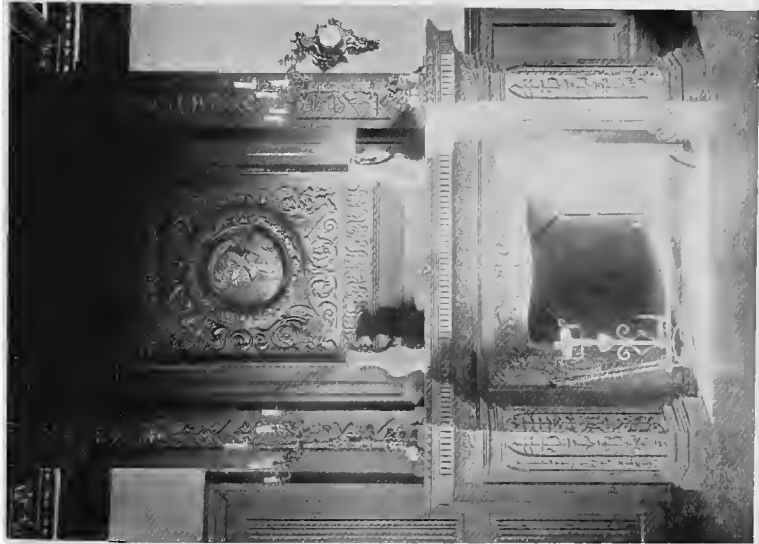
he himself had sprung; and, since he was writing merely for his own eyes and those of intimate friends, he snatched away—not, perhaps, without secret joy—the veil which thinly masked the failings of the aristocracy. It was some seven years after purchasing the Château of Réaux that he began to compile these reminiscences, which, when they were published for the first time in 1833, under the title of *Les Historiettes*, were universally pronounced to throw a most interesting and valuable light on the men, women, and morals of the seventeenth century. That many and many a hundred pages of these most fascinating memoirs were written at Réaux there cannot be the slightest doubt, and if for that reason only the place is well worthy of a pilgrimage. Tallemant des Réaux may himself be a somewhat shadowy figure, but his writings (the MS. of which was, I believe, found at the château) constitute such a collection of human documents that one naturally feels drawn towards the scene of their conception.

The next owner of the Château of Réaux was Louis Taboureau, Lord of Louy, councillor and secretary to the King, and on his death in Paris on May 30, 1746, it

passed to descendants, who, during the reign of Louis XVI, built the wing to the left of the entrance. After remaining in the possession of this family for a very long time, it was finally purchased, some ten or twelve years ago, by its present owner, M. Julien Barois.

What little restoration the château needed having been done about the year 1850, M. Barois found the buildings in an excellent state of preservation, and in that condition they still remain. He believes, however, that the house was at one time much larger than it is at present. Near the moat—once crossed by a drawbridge—and adjoining the tower to the right of the entrance are the remains of a wall, which in all probability belonged to a building destroyed during an attack on the château;—and that it was actually attacked is clearly proved by the bullet marks to be seen here and there on its massive, mellow walls. But “what the eye does not see the heart does not grieve over,” and we were, therefore, quite content with the beauties which Réaux could offer us. Viewed from some parts of the grounds, it made a most pretty picture, especially when the foreground was the tranquil, leaf-covered waters of the moat. We admired, too, the fine





FRANCIS I MANTELPIECE AT RÉAUX



PAINTED MANTELPIECE AT THE CHÂTEAU DE RÉAUX



Renaissance doorway leading from the back of the château to the main staircase, and, before visiting the interior, gave more than a passing glance at the Renaissance dormer-windows and the beautiful little lead figures of armoured knights, holding spears, which gallantly surmount the towers.

The drawing-room, which has a painted ceiling of great beauty, contains a Francis I mantelpiece in dark oak, a good example of modern wood-carving by the same artist whom the Marquis de Biencourt commissioned to ornament the bookcases and panelling in the library at the Château of Azay-le-Rideau. As regards decoration—and I may add that on the walls are many valuable family portraits—this is the most important room of the house. But the other rooms are in their way equally interesting, as, for instance, the quaint, cosy bedrooms, with their alcoves and ancient doors, provided with holes through which the cat could pass when tired of the company of the occupants; and a certain little room, with painted fireplace, ceiling, and walls, situated at the very top of one of the towers. We reached this charming room by means of a narrow stone staircase, the handrail of which, similar to

one we afterwards saw at Azay, is cut out of the stone,—a staircase so narrow that, as we squeezed ourselves up its winding steps, we wondered how any furniture could ever have been taken up it. But perhaps it was never seriously intended to be anything else than a room for temporary occupation,—a sort of look-out over the surrounding country when the enemy was on the march. Certainly a better point of vantage could not have been chosen, for the view from its windows extends as far as Saumur, whose grim castle, standing on a hill, can be distinctly seen on a fine day.

The sight of Saumur, gray and dim in the distance, reminded us that we must once more take to the road, and so, after making our adieus to our hosts, we started off to cover the ten miles which were to complete our journey down the Loire.

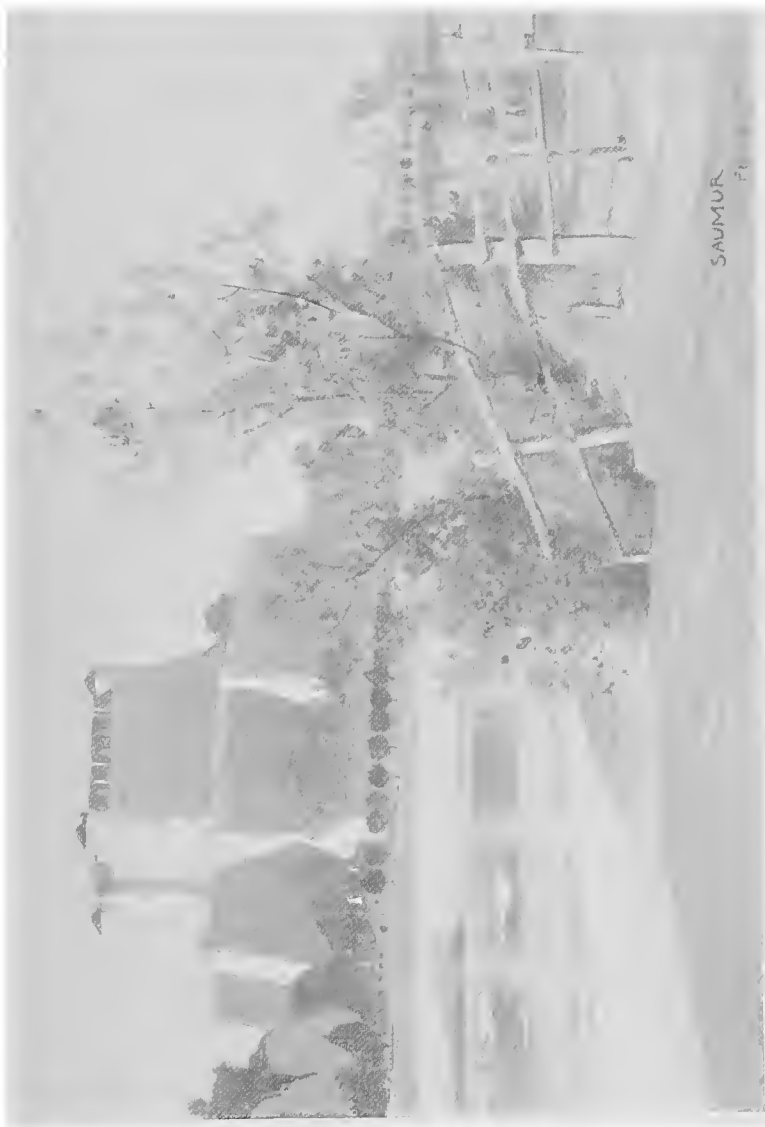
## CHAPTER VII

### AT SAUMUR AND MONTREUIL-BELLAY

THE traveller who has plenty of time at his disposal can easily spend a couple of agreeable days at Saumur. He might visit its several ancient churches, and profitably meditate on its religious vicissitudes, from the material effects of which it has never wholly recovered even to this day, though it is a long cry back to the period when, prior to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the emigration of the Protestants, it was a large and prosperous Calvinistic town. He might see the sixteenth century Hôtel de Ville, with its library and natural history collections,—all a little dusty and neglected, as things are wont to be in the provinces. He might, on his way to the castle, explore the narrow, picturesque streets at the base of the hill which commands the valleys of the Loire and the Thouet, in search of old buildings, such

as the house in which Madame Dacier, the translator of Homer and Aristophanes, was born in 1651. He might, if of a military turn of mind, inspect the cavalry school and pass judgment on the horsemanship of French officers. And, finally, he might even learn how the renowned white wines of the district are made to imitate champagne in everything save lightness and delicacy of flavour. In our case, however, the thought that we had as yet seen barely half of what we had come to Touraine to see, made us feel that we could not afford to devote more than half a day to Saumur, with the result that the major part of its attractions had to be accepted on hearsay from the lips of a loquacious old gentleman whom we chanced to meet at the hotel. Whether his knowledge of archæology was as sound as his taste for *vin blanc mousseux* was pronounced, I am not quite certain; but we agreed to give him the benefit of the doubt.

The shortness of our stay naturally led to a mere cursory inspection of some of the antiquities of Saumur. The castle was the only building we saw at all thoroughly, and consequently it is the only one on which I have any right to speak. Turning up one of



SAUMUR  
Fr

THE CASTLE OF SAUMUR





the small streets facing the Quai de Limoges, a very steep and circuitous path, winding through hillside gardens, brought us to the entrance, where we found the unavoidable guide waiting to receive us. The rôle he took, however, was a very unobtrusive one, consisting as it did in leading us from dungeon to dungeon, and from turret to turret, almost without a word of comment. He allowed us to linger as long as we pleased ; he did not presume to enter into our conversation. It was a pleasant change to feel that one had no competitor when recounting the history—such as it is—of the castle.

Geoffrey Martel, the son of Fulk the Black, began to build it in the eleventh century, but, like most mediæval fortresses, it was not completed until later,—until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Battles were waged beneath its precipitous enceinte ; it was won now by one, now by another fierce leader. Centuries of continued strife naturally brought in their train numerous changes in its architecture. It originally consisted of four large wings, but one of these has entirely disappeared, leaving a central courtyard open to the valley of the Loire. This courtyard contains the most decorative portions of one

of the most undecorative of the castles of Touraine : the sculptured exterior of a staircase, with niches which are said to have once held statues, and, over a doorway, a bas-relief, representing two wrestlers—presumably Gauls—covered with long hair. The latter work has every appearance of being exceedingly ancient, and it is probably even older than the castle itself. In the courtyard, also, stands a curious construction pierced with openings and with a domed roof. This gave air, rather than light, to a dark, subterranean room in which the lord of the castle tried his prisoners ; and as to the methods he employed to obtain evidence, we could form a very good idea in the glimmer of the guide's lantern. At one end of the chamber there is a sort of platform on which the lord and his advisers sat in judgment, and beneath this can still be seen part of the apparatus which was used to drag confession from their enemies. Many a time must that courtyard have rung with the screams of tortured men.

Grimness is the distinctive note of the Castle of Saumur. When its "memories" are not actually sinister, they are never very agreeable. You cannot think of it as a resi-



COURTYARD OF THE CASTLE OF SAUMUR



dence for any one except a mediæval warrior, continually on the alert ; and it is for that reason, I suppose, that it has never been anything else than a fortress, a prison, or a barracks. Descending to its dungeons, it was clear from the names and dates and pathetic words scratched on the walls to what purpose the castle had been put as far back as the days of Nicolas Foucquet, who spent part of his long imprisonment there. Napoleon 1, too, used it as a prison. After that it became a barracks,—a further step in its degradation. Here and there in its interior we could trace the remains of former decoration, but the rooms have been so cut up and mutilated that it was utterly impossible to reconstitute their ancient disposition. The pleasantest part of our visit came when we ascended to the top of one of the towers, whence we obtained, as the day was favourable, a perfect view in all directions, to Chinon and Bourgueil in the east, and even as far as Angers, whose cathedral spires gleamed in the north-west.

The pleasure we had experienced in travelling along the banks of the Loire had made us decide to follow the other rivers of Touraine, whenever possible, in a similar

manner ; and we should much have liked, on leaving Saumur, to have explored the meandering course of the Thouet, which flows into the Loire a little below that town. But practical difficulties stood in the way of such a journey, so we took the direct road to Montreuil-Bellay, the point on the pretty little tributary where we were to see another château.

As we arrived within sight of its massive towers, rising from amidst the trees on the summit of a hillock, I could not help mentally commenting on the contrast it formed to the severity and bareness of the Castle of Saumur. Indeed, we had as yet seen no more picturesque setting for a country residence. The Thouet, elsewhere a narrow stream, widens out at Montreuil-Bellay into a broad basin, divided into four branches by a number of islets, thickly wooded and covered with vegetation to the water's edge. It abounds with countless little sedgy backwaters, begemmed in summer with white and yellow water-lilies, and, like the islets themselves, alive with birds. It possesses two bridges, one dating from the Middle Ages, the other from 1811 ; and at the foot of the latter — completing the delightful picture

which can be seen from the castle's battlements—stands an ancient mill.

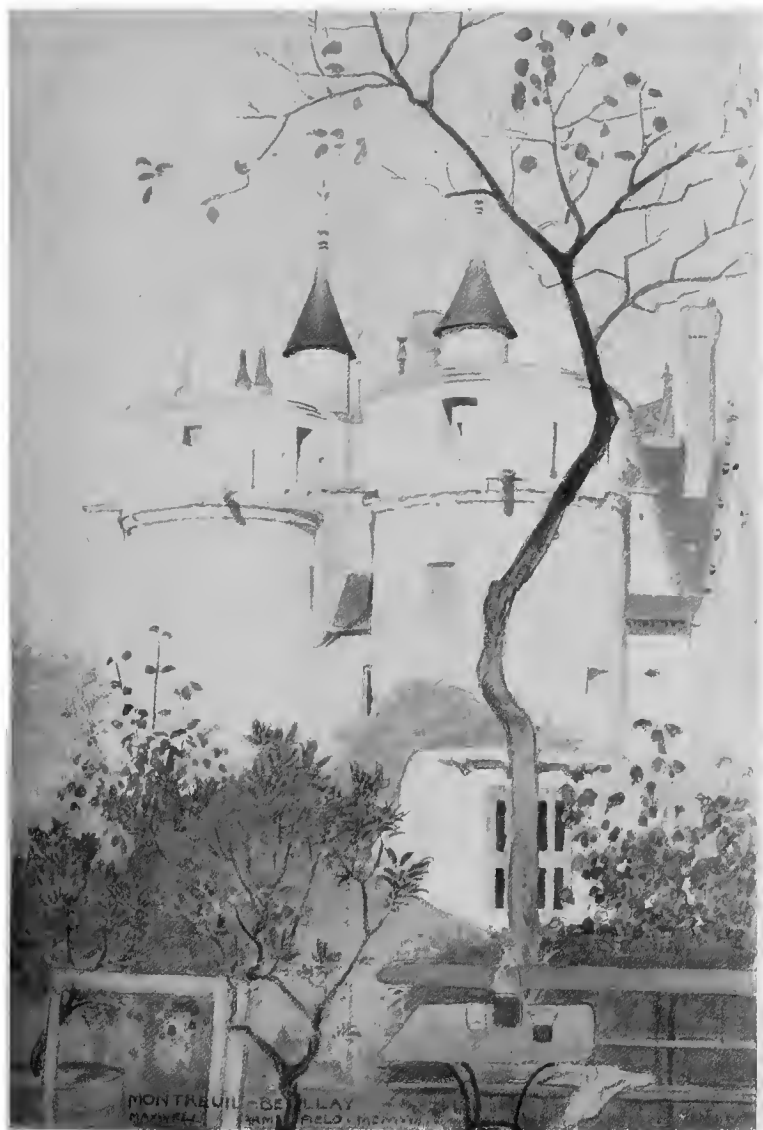
In tracing the origin of Montreuil-Bellay and its château one can go very far back in history. That the district was inhabited in prehistoric times has been shown by the discovery of flint implements, and also by the existence, near the little town, of prehistoric monuments. A Gallo-Roman village is said to have stood on the same site, though no conclusive proof of this has yet been brought forward. Later a feudal castle, surrounded by the dwellings of villains and serfs, was built on the hill above the Thouet ; and this early fortress is commonly believed to have fallen into the hands of Fulk the Black, who gave it in fief, about the year 1025, to a supporter named Berlay or Bellay, the brother-in-law of the man whom he had conquered. Bellay and his descendants, hoping to be able to dispense with the authority of the counts of Anjou, fortified the castle, whereupon Fulk v set out against them, and, in 1124, captured their stronghold. The ambition of another member of the same family, Giraud II, was similarly shattered twenty-six years later, when Geoffrey Plantagenet laid siege to the castle, which he did not capture, however,

until 1151, just a year from the time his troops had first encamped beneath its solid walls.

The next family to own the feudal castle of Montreuil-Bellay was that of the House of Melun, and with one of its descendants, Guillaume IV, Count of Tancarville, we come to the building of the present château. Early in the fifteenth century he constructed the Château-Vieil, in addition to a strong wall around the town, a wall the remains of which still exist, and which you must certainly see before leaving the district. The Harcourts, a Normandy family which held a position in the front rank of the French nobility, were the owners at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. They built the Château-Neuf and completed the Collegiate Church, which stands in the château grounds. The domain then passed to the House of Dunois, or Orleans-Longueville.

During the Wars of Religion, Montreuil-Bellay was occupied by the Huguenots' army, Henry of Navarre having captured it in 1589 whilst marching against Henry III. In 1622 the château was sold to Marshal de la Meilleraye, from whose hands it





A VIEW OF THE TOWERS OF MONTREUIL-BELLAY



passed to the House of Brissac, which possessed it until 1756, the date at which it was again sold, this time to the Duc de la Trémoille.

Confiscated during the Revolution, it was captured from General Saloman, on the night of June 8, 1793, by the royalists of the Vendée, but was retaken shortly afterwards by the Republicans, who for nearly a year used it as a prison for several hundred women whom the Committee of Public Safety had had arrested as *suspectes*. On the 6th of Messidor, Year IV, it was sold as national property to a merchant named Augustin Glaçon. But on the 25th of Brumaire, Year V, the sale was annulled, and the Trémoille family re-entered into possession, at first provisionally and then definitely. It was once more, and for the last time, sold on April 15, 1822. The new owner, M. Niveleau, bequeathed it to his son, M. Adrien Niveleau, who left it to his sister, Baronne Millin de Grandmaison, who in turn, in 1890, left it to her grand-nephew, the present owner, Baron Georges Millin de Grandmaison, the grandson of Marshal Lobau.

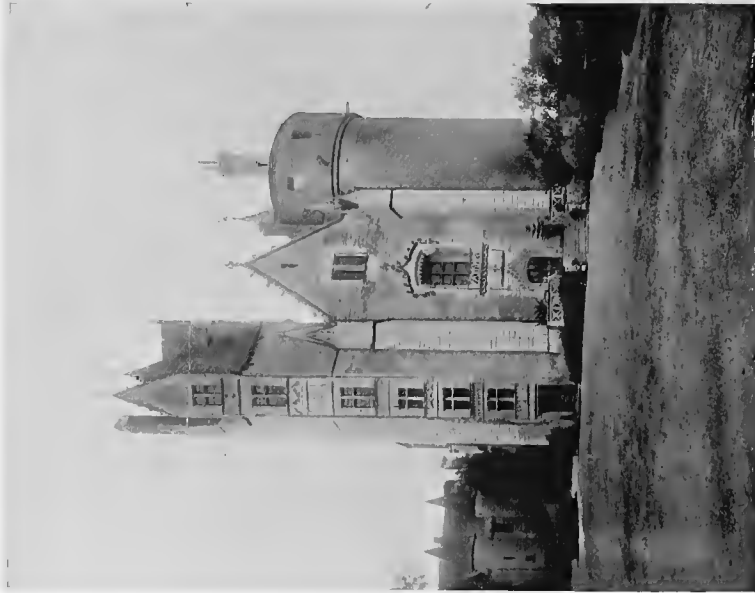
After so stormy a period as the Revolution, the Château of Montreuil-Bellay was naturally

in great need of restoration. M. Niveleau *père* did much to make it habitable, but Madame de Grandmaison thought that something more than mere absolutely necessary repairs was due to a house which had given hospitality to such illustrious people as Louis viii, Charles vii, Dunois, Louis xi, Charles viii, Duplessis-Mornay, Henry iv, Louis xiii, the Duchesse de Longueville, and Anne of Austria. So she commissioned M. Joly-Leterme, an architect of Saumur who had already restored public buildings in that town, to do his utmost to restore its exterior and its interior to the state it was in during its palmiest days. Most zealously did he carry out his work ; and if he is to be in any way criticised it is for being over-zealous as regards the decoration of the château rooms, some of which are perhaps a little too brilliant in their colouring.

The entrance to the château is between the towers of the Château-Vieil, once protected by a drawbridge. Passing into the *Cour d'honneur*, which forms a large terrace overlooking the garden and river, you see to the left the Château-Neuf and, adjoining, in an angle of the castle's enceinte, a curious little building with four round towers and conical slate roofs.



THE MEDIEVAL KITCHEN AT MONTREUIL-BELLAY



MONTREUIL-BELLAY : THE CHÂTEAU NEUF



THE TOP OF THE "ESCALIER D'HONNEUR" AT  
MONTREUIL-BELLAY

This is known as the Petit Château, and it dates from the fifteenth century. It was probably used by some of the canons who officiated in the Collegiate Church; and as these dignitaries were quite as fond of good living as their master the Lord of Montreuil-Bellay, what more natural than that the kitchen of the castle should be next door to them? Like many mediæval buildings used for a similar purpose, this kitchen is separate from the château proper; but, instead of being round or polygonal, as is usually the case, it is square. It possesses two fireplaces, which are still in use; a third, and a double one, was in the centre, but this has been modified, though the central brick chimney, from which huge spits were once suspended for the roasting of quarters of oxen, still remains. Alterations have also been made to the doors and windows. But in spite of these modifications the building does not lose any of its interest; it is, indeed, in the opinion of Viollet-le-Duc, who has devoted many lines to it in his *Dictionnaire d'Architecture*, one of the most remarkable kitchens in France.

In visiting the Château-Neuf, we entered by a door in its large octagonal tower, which

contains the main staircase, the steps of which, alternately white and gray, are so gentle that, to use the words of one who described the castle in the eighteenth century, "a horse could easily mount to the third-floor, forty feet from the ground." At the top of this *escalier d'honneur* is a beautiful fan vaulting, with bosses bearing the coloured escutcheons of the various families who have owned the château.

Apart from the Château of Langeais, I cannot think of any private residence in Touraine where you can see such fine rooms as those at Montreuil-Bellay. The colouring may, as I have already said, be slightly overdone, but there are so many other features in their favour that that is soon forgiven and forgotten. The chimney-pieces are in the purest Flamboyant style; the prismatic mullioned windows have recesses of extraordinary depth; and the decorated ceilings, with their huge beams, are so unique that they alone would easily provide matter for a special study. I spent nearly an hour examining these ceilings, and even then I had not exhausted all that they had to show. In their case I imagine that the hand of the restorer played but a minor part;



though I was interested not so much by their design and colour as by the extremely curious mediæval grotesques which are carved on the main beams in the dining-room, in the Salle de Longueville, in the Chambre de la Trémoille, and in other rooms. Placed sometimes at the ends, sometimes in the centre, these strange carvings produce a weird impression on the onlooker, carrying him back to the days when almost anything was licensed in art. The artist who executed them had evidently no fear of shocking the sensibilities of the inhabitants of the château, presuming that he did not receive explicit instructions to give free rein to his imagination. In one corner he has carved the head of a giant in the act of swallowing a nude woman; in another, the squat figure of an animal, to be seen nowhere in nature; in a third place, the body of a crouching dog with the head of a nun; and in a fourth, a grinning dwarf whose attitude is such as to preclude description. Many of them, in fact, have to be placed in this last category. You cannot imagine how realistic they are until you have seen them, and their realism is further heightened by the addition of colour. As regards the furnishing of the

rooms, the Château of Montreuil-Bellay is a perfect museum. The countless works of art to be seen on all sides include carved Renaissance sideboards and beds, Boule cabinets, tables inlaid with tortoise-shell, Empire chairs, seventeenth and eighteenth century clocks, Venetian mirrors, Nevers, Rouen, and Italian china, suits of armour and ancient weapons, seventeenth and eighteenth century andirons, firebacks bearing the arms of great families, ancient locks and keys, and a large number of similar objects in wrought-iron. The tapestries deserve mention by themselves. There are two Brussels panels of the sixteenth century: one, which is incomplete, representing the departure of Paulus Æmilius for Greece; the other, which bears the words *Perseus thesauros suos navi committit et frustra cogitans fugam in templo se adcondit*, showing Perseus putting his treasures in a place of safety. Gobelins and Beauvais tapestries of the eighteenth century, depicting such games as Blind Man's Buff and Hot Cockles, are in the dining-room; whilst in other rooms are various others, including a series of Aubusson. The pictures, we were told, are less important than the tapestries, so, as our



THE TRÉMOUILLE BEDROOM AT MONTREUIL-BELLAY



time was growing short, we forewent these and hurried off to the oratory, a little room which, though its painted walls and its vaulted, painted ceiling have lost much of their original richness and harmony, is still not without beauty.

The garden, owing to the necessarily cramped space within the castle walls and its position on the slope of a hill, is not a feature of Montreuil-Bellay ; consequently, we did no more than pass through it by a gently sloping path which descends the hillside and leads to the public road on the bank of the river. Following this road, which replaced the rampart that once skirted the main branch of the stream, we soon came to one of the existing walls, terminated by a round tower at the water's edge and pierced by a semicircular doorway, bearing the date April 30, 1669. We passed through,—and not far from there found our boatman. I can assure you that there is no more fitting way of concluding a visit to Montreuil-Bellay than by making an excursion on the river, for it enables you to examine the remains of the fifteenth century bridge which crossed the stream at this point of its course, to obtain certain views of the château which

cannot be had from any other position, and—what is perhaps even more important, after seeing so much—to rest the eye in the green and shady nooks and corners of the islands of the Thouet.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ALONG THE VIENNE: TO CHINON

IF, whilst in Touraine, you are anywhere within a reasonable distance of Fontevrault, by all means make a point of visiting it, since to neglect to do so is one of those omissions which afterwards weigh heavily on a traveller's conscience. In our case, this ancient little town happened to lie on the direct route from Montreuil-Bellay to the mouth of the Vienne; but had it been necessary to go out of our way to see it, we should not have hesitated to make the detour. Nay, after seeing its antiquities, the celebrity of which had long aroused our curiosity, I should not have considered we had come too far had we made a special journey of a hundred kilometres.

Fontevrault is peculiarly interesting to English people. Henry II of England, his wife Eleonora of Guyenne, Richard Cœur

de Lion, and John's wife, Isabella of Angoulême, were buried in its famous abbey ; and although their graves, with those of many other royal personages, were desecrated at the time of the Revolution, the statues which covered them can still be seen in one of the transepts of the abbey church. The statue of Isabella, who is represented holding an open book in her hands, is of oak ; the other effigies are of soft calcareous stone ; and all are coloured, though not with the colours which enhanced their beauty in the twelfth century.

The abbey, which was founded about the end of the eleventh century by Robert of Arbrissel, a Breton priest of great fame as a preacher and ascetic, was regarded with particular favour by royalty, no fewer than fourteen of the abbesses who succeeded Petronella de Craon-Chemillé, the first to hold the office, being princesses. And until its suppression in 1793 it continued to be the usual place to which young ladies of the blood royal of France were sent for education.

In another respect the order of Fontevrault was equally noteworthy ; it was, indeed, unique in so far as it consisted of both



nuns and monks, under the sole authority of an abbess.

How beautiful their abbey must have been at one time of its history may be judged by what remains of its architectural features after more than a century of ill-treatment. The work of mutilation begun by the revolutionaries of 1793 was continued when the fine old abbey was turned, early in the nineteenth century, into a convict prison,—a degrading use to which we were surprised to find it continues to be put. But, in spite of the irreparable damage which was done up to as late as 1816, and which the authorities are now seeking to repair by tardy restoration, the buildings are still exceedingly fine specimens of the architecture of the twelfth and sixteenth centuries.

In addition to seeing the church, we paid an only too brief visit, under the guidance of a warder, to the cloisters and the chapter house. The southern ambulatory, which skirts the refectory, dates from the early years of the sixteenth century, but the three other galleries were not built until 1540, if not until as late as 1560. The tiling, which you cannot fail to notice

just before entering the chapter house, is also sixteenth century work, as well as the magnificently carved doorway and the mural paintings—unfortunately in very poor condition—by Thomas Pot and other artists of the Renaissance.

Two other churches, both of the twelfth century, were connected with the Abbey of Fontevrault: the Church of St. Lazarus, now used as an infirmary, and the Church of St. Benedict. But the prison regulations forbid either these or a curious building of the same period, which we chanced to catch a glimpse of on leaving, to be visited. Inspection of the former we felt we could easily forgo, but it was hard to have to drag ourselves away without seeing the interior of the latter, of which we had read an account in Viollet-le-Duc's great dictionary. The Tour d'Evrault, as it is called, is a building of three storeys: the first an octagon, the second a square, and the third an octagon; and these are surmounted by a sort of pyramidal structure. For a long time it was supposed to have been used as a chapel, but it is now known to have been the abbey kitchen. Comparison with the kitchens of Montreuil-

Bellay and Moulin would have been instructive. We found consolation for this deprivation in the thirteenth century chapel of St. Catherine, now a private house facing an avenue of lime trees, and in the parish church of St. Michel, noteworthy for the extremely picturesque wooden construction surrounding it, as well as for an altar in gilded wood, dating from 1621, and other art treasures which were once in the neighbouring abbey.

It was not long, after leaving Fontevrault, before we renewed acquaintance with our old friend the Loire. There, at the turning of the road leading to Chinon, the ancient town of Montsoreau, an incident in whose history inspired Alexandre Dumas with a heroine and a title for one of his novels, tempted us to tarry. But neither its churches nor its fifteenth century château had power to do more than slightly slacken our pace as we swept along towards the more attractive little town of Candès, then almost within sight.

Candès is a Gallic name meaning "confluent," and, as you rightly suppose, it is situated at the point where the Loire and the Vienne join forces. The meeting

of the rivers, which can best be viewed from the terraced garden of a gentleman's house on the slope of the hill above the narrow, winding streets of the town, helps, with the aid of distant pastures and browsing cattle, to form a most beautiful picture, above all towards the close of evening, when the wide expanse of water, as still as a lake, is rich in deep, subtle reflections. This not-to-be-forgotten view will be found to be a very pleasant afterpiece to your visit to the church of St. Martin, which was built in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, and the square, machicolated towers of which are on a level with this terrace.

To find so important a church as that of St. Martin in so small a place as Candès is an anomaly which rarely fails to strike those who pass that way. It is, indeed, a cathedral in miniature, resembling, in some respects, that of Poitiers. A finer proportioned building you will not meet anywhere, and such graceful, slender pillars as those which rise to its beautiful vaulted roof you will see only in the choicest examples of ecclesiastical architecture. The decoration, too, is remarkable, for its

sculpture is not only original in its character and abundant but also coloured. The porch, which bears the name of St. Michel, is likewise an exquisite piece of carving, notwithstanding the mutilation which its statues have undergone; and, in addition, I would have you notice how particularly elegant is the manner in which the ribs of the vaulted roof spread out from the slender central column which supports it.

The saint to whom this beautiful church is dedicated founded a monastery at Candès, and on the site of a lateral apse, a little older than the church itself, stood the cell in which he died about the year 400. This portion of the edifice has been entirely rebuilt, and a modern stained glass window tells how St. Martin's body was removed at night-time by his followers and taken up the Loire for burial at Tours.

The country between Candès and Chinon is of a wilder character than that along the banks of the Loire, and, comparing river with river, the Vienne is the more ruggedly picturesque. As you pass along the road, bordered now with poplars, now with walnut trees, from whose fruit the inhabitants of the district obtain an oil

which they prefer to that of the olive, the exuberance of Nature is on all sides apparent. You feel that you are now in the true Touraine,—the Touraine of Rabelais. It is a country of fruit-laden orchards, of vineyards productive of much red wine, and of rich pasture-land ; a country peopled by a genial, joke-loving, full-blooded population, primitive in their manners and customs and perhaps a little lax in their morals. You can picture it, without being far wrong, as a pale reflection of the *Heroic Deeds and Sayings of the Good Pantagruel*, which, as is only natural, contains many allusions to Chinon and places in the district through which you are passing. For the author of that immortal book was a man of these parts, and may be regarded as typifying both his age and his birth-place. Some authorities say that he was born at Chinon, about the year 1483 ; others that he first saw the light on the estate of La Devinière, near La Roche-Clermault ; and it is known for certain that he began his studies in the Benedictine Abbey of Seuilly, barely a mile from the latter place. Whilst at St. Germain-sur-Vienne, where we stopped the night, in



THE CHÂTEAU DE PETIT-THOUARS



DINING-ROOM AT THE CHÂTEAU DE PETIT-THOUARS



order to be able to keep an appointment at the neighbouring Château of Petit Thouars, we had an opportunity of confirming our impression as to Rabelais' writings and the characteristics of the present-day population of the Rabelais country. One of the most primitive of village inns was our quarters; our companions were the sons and daughters of the soil; and such conditions as those are indispensable if you would learn anything of the intimate side of a people's life and mentality. At the same time we saw the Vienne under some of its most pleasing aspects. At this part of its course, a few miles from Candès, it is a slow-moving, majestic river bordered with willows and poplars, and dotted here and there with thickly wooded islands. Seen in the gray light of early morning or during a sunset, when the fishermen's boats, with their hanging nets, are moored in mid-stream, and the wooded banks stand out against a roseate sky, shading into a delicate green, it is equally fascinating, and, as my companion, who is an artist, remarked, is suggestive of countless pictures.

The Château of Petit Thouars, which

stands above St. Germain, on the summit of the range of hills overlooking the valley of the Vienne, was built in 1440, at the time when Charles VII was holding his frivolous Court at the Castle of Chinon. According to certain documents, it is supposed to have been constructed by one of the King's ministers, the Sire de la Trémouille, who was then the owner of the Château of Thouars, in the Department of Deux-Sèvres. After passing through the hands of various owners, it was acquired in 1610 by the Aubert de St. Georges family, the elder branch of which still possesses it. The present owner is M. Georges Aubert de St. Georges, Comte du Petit Thouars.

Its architecture, as has so often happened in the case of old buildings, has undergone many changes, in accordance with the varying tastes of successive occupants, and its style is now that of the period of Louis XII. The oldest and best preserved part of the château is an interior courtyard, where, on the windows of a tower, can be seen some exceedingly old sculpture. The interior of this tower consists of a winding stone staircase, which, like the principal façade and other parts of the building, has been recently

restored. In the garden stands a picturesque circular dovecote of huge dimensions,—the only one we saw in Touraine.

The interior of Petit Thouars, though it does not call for a lengthy description, contains several things of considerable interest to the connoisseur. In the drawing-room is a rather fine mantelpiece, bearing the arms of the Aubert de St. Georges family ; but your attention will soon be diverted from this to the pictures on the walls. These are reduced copies of some of the works, representing the principal events in the life of Marie de' Medici, which Rubens painted for that Queen between 1621 and 1625, and which, until they were removed to the Louvre, under the Second Empire, were in a gallery, adjoining her bedroom, in the Luxembourg Palace. They were the work of one of the numerous skilful pupils whom the celebrated painter had in his studio at Antwerp, and they were specially executed for the Château of Petit Thouars, where they have remained ever since the seventeenth century. On the dining-room walls are a number of family portraits, including two ancestors of M. Georges Aubert de St. Georges who were military governors of the castle and district of Saumur. The

painted ceilings of these two rooms were repainted at the time of the last restoration of the château, and their designs recall certain of those on the ceilings at the Castle of Blois.

Our entry into Chinon was made on just such a day as that on which I would have you see this delightful old town and its magnificent ruined castle. It was a glorious sunny August morning, hours before the summer heat had become inconvenient. The sky was a deep Italian blue, with white fleecy clouds, snow-white under the sun, floating slowly along as far as the horizon. The air had that perfect clarity which makes all but the most distant objects seem quite near at hand. The three distinct fortresses of which the castle is composed—the Château de Saint Georges, the Château du Milieu, and the Château du Coudray, stretching in a line from east to west on the steep hill on whose side and base the houses nestle, tier upon tier—were particularly illusive in their apparent nearness, as we found on climbing the winding streets which lead to the entrance. Long though the climb was, however, it was anything but wearisome, for our attention was continually being directed to some fresh object of curiosity: at one time to an old



THE CASTLE OF CHINON



A VIEW OF CHINON FROM THE CASTLE

house with carved wooden front and doorway ; at another, to a charming little sculptured window, or ancient piece of wrought-iron work ; and again, to picturesque white-washed cottages, festooned with vines, in streets where the brilliant sunshine and deep sharp-edged shadows gave one the impression of being under a southern sky.

As we reached the top of the hill and stood resting on a bridge preceding the Pavillon de l'Horloge, where we had been told to ring for entrance, and whose tower, over a hundred feet in height, contains a clock which is said to have struck the hours for close upon four centuries, I was reminded by the view of the lines quoted by Pantagruel in that chapter of his *Faicts et Dicts Heroiques*, in which it is claimed that Chinon (*Caino*) was built by Cain and is, therefore, " the oldest city in the world."

"Chinon,  
Little town,  
Great renown,  
On old stone  
Long has stood ;  
There's the Vienne, if you look down ;  
If you look up, there's the wood."

The description still holds good, and it is likely to do so until the end of time. As the cluster of gray, irregular-roofed houses lying im-

mediately beneath our feet clearly showed, Chinon is ever the little town it was in Rabelais' day. It has maintained its reputation, too, in comparison with other celebrated old towns of France,—a reputation unparalleled as regards picturesqueness, whatever its position may be from the point of view of history. In tracing its story, one need go no farther back than Roman times, when it was an important military centre, connected by splendid roads with other strategical points of Touraine. Early Christian saints chose it as a place for the foundation of churches and a monastery. A little later, about 500, when Clovis was preparing to unite his conquests from the Loire to the Pyrenees, he made it one of his principal fortresses: and thus set an example which was to be followed down the centuries by the counts of Touraine, by Geoffrey Martel, by Henry II of England, by Charles VII, and by Louis XI. To at least one of these princes, Chinon was, however, something more than a mere stronghold. To Henry II it was his favourite residence on the Continent, and you can quite understand the reason why, if you consider what a matchless view he had from his castle windows: here, in the foreground, the gray little town;



there, the Vienne, sparkling in the sunlight for mile upon mile, mirroring the trees on its banks and the clouds in the sky; and beyond, the fresh green wooded country, stretching to a hazy horizon.

Our visit to the castle was made doubly enjoyable by the fact that we were accompanied by a guide who left us plenty of time to indulge in historical recollections. He was a small boy of seven, with neither hat nor coat, and with stockingless legs as brown as mahogany. In the most delightful, unceremonious way he led us from dismantled room to crumbling bastion, and from tower to dungeon, repeating the history of each place in his delightfully innocent infantile manner. Then, when he had repeated his well-learnt lesson, he would run away to climb a ruined battlement, where, in an almost inaccessible crevice, he had espied some wild pinks, or to chase a butterfly which had fluttered past us in the tangled garden into which the space between the castle walls has been converted. Had we not perceived that he was as sure-footed as a chamois we should more than once have feared to see him fall headlong into the moats beneath our feet.

Chinon, like Fontevrault, will ever be interesting to English people on King Henry's account, little estimable though he was as husband and father. In addition to his frequent sojourns at the castle, he died there in 1189, on hearing from the French ambassadors that his favourite son John had joined his brothers in their revolt against him. This dramatic event occurred in that part of the castle called the Grand-Logis, where Henry was then lying sick and bedridden. "On hearing his son's name," runs the record, "he was seized with a sort of convulsive movement, sat up in bed, and, gazing around with searching and haggard eyes, exclaimed, 'Can it be true that John, my heart, the son of my choice, him whom I have doted on more than all the rest, and my love for whom has brought on me all my woes, has fallen away from me?' They replied that it was even so; that nothing could be more true. 'Well, then,' he said, falling back on his bed, and turning his face to the wall, 'henceforward let all go on as it may; I no longer care for myself nor for the world.'" Another famous interview, that between Jeanne Darc and Charles VII, and which heralded the downfall



THE CHÂTEAU DE COULAINÉ

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same room some two and a half centuries later. Amidst the light of torches and a brilliant assembly of nobles, the Maid entered "like a poor little shepherdess" and singled out the King from amongst the crowd of courtiers with whom he had purposely mingled, thus taking the first definite step towards prevailing upon him to throw off his lethargy and raise the siege of Orleans. During her five weeks' residence at the castle she occupied a still existing tower of the Château du Coudray. These are the two principal historical pictures which the Castle of Chinon summons to the mind. But it will suggest a host of other minor events and characters which have passed across the stage of history, and among them none more noteworthy than the introduction of Agnes Sorel—*la belle des belles*—to the Court of Charles VII. When one of the Queen's maids-of-honour she had, of course, her appointed apartment; but after she had won Charles' entire affection she was provided with a house in the neighbourhood, and the King, in order to be able to visit her in secret, connected it with the castle by means of a subterranean passage.

Before leaving Chinon and district for the southern portion of Touraine we made an

excursion of a few miles to Beaumont-en-Véron, a little removed from the banks of the Vienne, to see the pretty little Château of Coulaïne, and, unless you are very pressed for time, you may be recommended to do the same. It was built in 1470 by Jean Garguesalle, *premier écuyer* to Louis XI and Governor of Chinon. About the middle of the sixteenth century it was owned by Henri de Craon, who took part, in 1559, in the reform of the Customs of Touraine, and whose son Claude, born at the château in 1556, became a celebrated Greek scholar. The Dowager Baroness de Coulaïne de Clock, a descendant of the Garguesalle family, is the present owner. Its graceful façade consists of a slender octagonal tower, containing a staircase, flanked by two wings, each terminated by a smaller round tower,—a façade decorated with foliage, mediæval figures, and over each pair of windows a swan and the head of a stag. Its most elaborate piece of sculpture is that of the doorway, on which are the arms of the Coulaïne family and their motto : “*Va ferme à l’assault qui sit à la prise.*”

## CHAPTER IX

### AT LE GRAND PRESSIGNY AND LA GUERCHE

TO a large number of the many thousands of people who annually visit Touraine some of the finer features of the scenery of the ancient province remain unknown. As a rule, tourists travel in the districts of the Loire and the Indre ; they follow, perhaps, a part of the course of the Vienne ; and they touch, say, at two or three points on the Cher where there are famous country houses ; but they leave unseen, since they go no farther south than Loches, the more exhilarating landscapes of that valley of the river Creuse whose beauties—almost unknown in France some half a century ago—have been so glowingly described by George Sand. On only one plea is this omission pardonable,—that of shortness of time, an obstacle to travel which is further increased in this, as in other parts of France, by an execrable train service. And here let me

point out that the only way of seeing Touraine thoroughly is to travel by motor-car or on a cycle. Masters of the open road and with a reasonable amount of time at your disposal, there can be no excuse for not visiting the gorges of the Creuse.

“The river,” says the Abbé Chevalier in his *Promenades Pittoresque en Touraine*,—“the river, sometimes calm and peaceful in the deep basins formed by the natural irregularities of the ground, each a lower level than the other, sometimes rushing along, amidst foam, and with a roar, down the steep slopes over which it must pass at point after point, meanders capriciously from one side of the valley to the other, but with a preference for skirting the western side. Here, the bare hillside drops perpendicularly into the water ; there, it is a cliff all pierced with caverns, which must at one time have been the dwellings of men of primitive ages ; farther on, it becomes less wild and is decked with pleasant verdure. The horizon, a slightly uneven line, is everywhere extensive. The landscape consists of animated undulating country opening up distance beyond distance.”

This picturesque valley of gorges begins at Confolent, near Fresselines, where the Petite



Creuse joins the greater river, and can perhaps best be seen there, in the department of La Creuse; but you can form a very good idea of its beauty without leaving the geographical area which you have chosen as a holiday ground, without going farther than La Guerche, where, apart from beautiful scenery, you will find a fine old château.

A splendid national road—such a one as is found anywhere in France, and which makes motoring and cycling in that country so enjoyable—leads from Chinon to this new district by way of St. Epain, Ste. Maure, La Celle St. Avant, La Haye-Descartes (a little town in which René Descartes, the philosopher, was born on March 31, 1596), and Le Grand Pressigny. From Ste. Maure to Le Grand Pressigny the country is one of poplars, and the nearer you approach the end of the first half of your journey to La Guerche the wilder and hillier it becomes. On reaching Le Grand Pressigny you should make a halt, in order to see the ruins of its castle, to hunt for implements of the Stone Age, and perhaps to stop a night (as we did) under the red-tiled roof of one of its primitive yet homely inns.

The principal feature of the castle, which crowns a hill overlooking the little town, is its keep, an imposing square tower, thirty yards high and more than seven yards broad, bearing the scars of a hundred battles, out of all of which it has come forth still stout and strong. Time has damaged it infinitely more than the hand of man. The most dilapidated part is the machicolated top, which was added at the end of the fourteenth century, the rest of the tower dating from about the middle of the twelfth. This keep was the centre, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, of a complete system of defensive works, consisting of ramparts with turrets at the corners, moat, glacis, etc.; but no trace of these remain. The existing ivy-covered enceinte, which was once strongly fortified, as you can see by the remains of its towers, was built to replace them at a later period, it is supposed at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Some hundred years later, the lord of the castle, finding that his stronghold was not particularly well adapted for the purpose of a residence, had a house built near at hand, and parts of this, now occupied by the gendarmery, are still standing.



LE GRAND PRESSIGNY: THE KEEP



THE CHÂTEAU DE LA GUERCHE

Apart from the castle, Le Grand Pressigny is interesting to archæologists on account of the large number of implements of the Stone Age which have been found there. The peasants of the district, some years ago, used to plough them up by thousands and wonder what they were. Not until the sixties was the importance of their discovery made known to the scientific world. A certain Dr. Lèveillé had his attention drawn to these skilfully fashioned arrow-heads, spears, axes, and wedges; and he at once saw that only the hand of man could have produced them. Further inquiry brought to light the fact that they were to be found in equally large numbers in the four Communes of Chaumussay, Abilly, Barrou, and La Guerche,—a clear proof that Le Grand Pressigny and district formed an immense workshop for the production of these tools and weapons, and that for some now unknown reason it was abandoned with its entire stock-in-trade. The curé of Chaumussay has a fine collection of these flint implements, and he will be glad to show it to you, if you care to run over from Le Grand Pressigny—it is only five miles away—to see him.

On leaving Le Grand Pressigny for La Guerche, a winding departmental road mounts a steep hill, and on reaching the top you proceed through a country of small fir trees. Furze and heather border the way, a beautiful edging of yellow and purple which stretches out, in mingled patches, under the trees. This touch of colour comes to an end only too soon. The edge of the plateau is quickly reached, and then, with fruit trees on either hand, you rapidly descend to La Guerche and the valley of the Creuse.

The Château of La Guerche, which we visited before exploring the banks of the river, is not one of the show-places of Touraine. It is remarkable neither for its architecture, nor its sculpture, nor its gardens. You will look in vain in its rather neglected rooms for such superb tapestries or such rare pieces of furniture as are to be seen at Langeais, though it possesses two or three carved cabinets which few connoisseurs would scorn to place in their collections. And amongst its pictures you will find but a small number of works, if any, worthy of being compared with the masterpieces of Chenonceaux. Yet it is one of those places

the recollection of which outlasts that of many another more renowned château. Its charm is that of the unrestored, untended building,—a charm than which, to certain minds, there is none more potent. If you are poetically inclined, you will be bound to appreciate its tangled, moss-grown courtyard, with its fountain-basin green with age. If you are a lover of the picturesque, you will be delighted with its situation on the beautiful Creuse, from whose stony bed its towers rise more than a hundred feet. If you like those houses which are enveloped in a spirit of romance, you will not regret having included it in your programme. Poetry, picturesqueness, and, above all, romance,—such are the characteristics of La Guerche.

An historian of the Châteaux of Touraine once said that La Guerche was “the mysterious boudoir of the fifteenth century.” He could not have given it a more appropriate description, for there is a love story inextricably bound up with its history, and authorities differ as to the way it should be told. That the château was built for a lady by Charles VII every one agrees, but as to who that lady was—Agnes Sorel or Antoinette de Maignelais

—they wholly disagree. M. Raoul de Croy, the owner of the château, is a firm believer, with others, that it was Agnes Sorel, and that La Guerche has every bit as much right to be regarded as a former home of the King's *amie par amour* as Cheillé, Champigny, or any other of her Touraine houses. He claims, moreover, not only to have located the very room in which she slept, a small bedroom with an alcove and a deeply recessed window which looks out on to the dark waters of the Creuse, but also to possess the tomb, covered with a very mutilated statue, which he says was erected to her memory in the eleventh century church at La Guerche. This tomb and statue you will see in a long corridor adjoining the bedroom. Unfortunately for these assertions, not one of those who have advanced them have ever brought forward any proof; they rest wholly on tradition; whereas the historians who hold that the château was built for the other lady are able, with the aid of documentary evidence, to make out a very strong case. Here are the facts, as given by M. Carré de Busserolle, the soundest authority one can consult in studying the archæology of the Indre-et-Loire.





THE BILLIARD-ROOM AT LA GUERCHE



CHÂTEAU DE LA GUERCHE: AGNES SOREL'S BEDROOM

The estate of La Guerche, on which there once stood an even older castle than the present château, since we find it mentioned in a charter of 1095, was owned from at least the year 1400 by the Châteaugiron, Frotier, and Malestroit families. On May 21, 1448, Jehan de Malestroit and his father Geoffrey sold it, not to Charles VII, as has been stated, but to Nicole Chambes, a gentleman of Scotch origin, and he, on October 19, 1450, resold it to André de Villequier. It was at this latter date that the Château of La Guerche was built and that Antoinette de Maignelais enters, or perhaps I ought to say re-enters on the scene. Agnes Sorel—poisoned, it is alleged, by Louis XI—had died in the previous February, murmuring to those around her the touching words “*que c’était peu de chose, et orde et vile, que notre fragilité,*” and the fickle Charles had consoled himself by returning to his earlier sweetheart. Antoinette de Maignelais, who was Agnes Sorel’s cousin, had presented her at Court and had been promptly supplanted in the King’s affections. But the forsaken lady, “*adroit and insinuating courtesan*” as she was, knew how to bide her time, and a few months after Agnes’ death had once more

gained her old power over Charles. The Château of La Guerche was an earnest of his future fidelity. The fact that the nominal owner was André de Villequier does not conflict with the assertion that it was built for Antoinette, for this nobleman, whom you can regard as either very unscrupulous or very devoted to his sovereign, was her husband. Their marriage took place about the very time that the building of the château was commenced, and it is a significant thing that, "in consideration of the union," Charles presented Villequier with the islands of Oléron, Marennnes, and Arvert, in addition to the Viscounty of St. Sauveur and the Barony of Neahou. Antoinette was not one to object to so equivocal an arrangement. You may judge of her character by the fact that, a year after her husband's death, she publicly became the mistress of Francis II, Duke of Brittany.

"But if these statements are correct," ask the Sorelites, "how do you account for the presence at La Guerche of Agnes' tomb and statue?" "That is easily answered," reply the supporters of Antoinette de Maignelais. "It is not Agnes' tomb at all, but that of Jacqueline de Miolans, the first wife of Jean

Baptiste de Villequier, and who died, if you wish to know the exact date, in the year 1518."

Nevertheless, is it not curious that at La Guerche there should be this tradition as to Agnes Sorel's ownership of the château, and that she and Charles, moreover, should be said to have founded a chapel, the ruins of which are in the forest, in memory of a young girl who, whilst bird's-nesting in company with her betrothed, a falconer, was killed by a wolf?

Surrounded, until the beginning of the seventeenth century, by walls and a moat, the Château of La Guerche was accounted one of the strongest castles in the southern portion of Touraine. However, at the close of the sixteenth century, when it was still owned by the Villequier family, it was attacked and taken by assault. Claude de Villequier and his son Georges had joined the League, with the result that the district of La Guerche and that of Upper Poitou was in a continual state of agitation. Having captured all the castles for miles around, including those of Le Grand Pressigny and Etableaux, they appear to have made themselves particularly objectionable to the inhabitants, who fre-

quently complained of the ill-treatment they received at the hands of the bands of ruffianly soldiers whom Claude de Villequier had taken into his service. But at last these complaints were heard, and Arnaud de St. Lary, Lord of Salers and Governor of the Castle of Loches, set out with Louis Chateigner, Baron of Preuilly, and their men to chastise the Viscount of La Guerche and his turbulent son. A stubborn fight took place beneath the castle walls; an entrance was forced; and the defenders were put to flight. The Viscount of La Guerche and other noblemen were drowned in the Creuse when attempting to escape in a boat which had been kept in readiness, and a similar fate was reserved for more than four hundred out of the six hundred and fifty Leaguers who lost their lives on that eventful day.

This is the most stirring event I have to record in the story of La Guerche. Its history subsequent to the defeat of the Leaguers was as calm and uneventful as it had been in the days when Charles and Antoinette lived beneath its roof, as I am convinced they must many times have done whilst André de Villequier was visiting his islands off the coast of the ancient province

of Aunis. And may it never, was our wish as we set off to see the gorges of the Creuse, know ought save peaceful events, since those are what best accord with its atmosphere of quiet romance.

## CHAPTER X

### AT LA CHAPELLE-BLANCHE AND LOCHES

WHILST on the way to Loches we were reminded of the well-known fact that Touraine was at one time covered by the sea, and that over more than thirty thousand acres of its area there is scattered an easily discernible proof. We had to pass through the district of the *falunières*, those strata which contain billions of fossil shells, and which, at but a few inches below the surface of the ground, extend, in parts, to a depth of fifteen to twenty yards ; so we stopped the car at least twice in search of specimens, and were rewarded by finding nearly thirty different kinds. Had we been expert geologists, with plenty of time to devote to natural history, I dare say we should have found many more, for no fewer than three hundred species of marine shells have been identified in these *faluns*. Scientists naturally regard them with





THE CHÂTEAU DE GRILLEMONT



great interest. So also do the agriculturists of La Chapelle-Blanche, Ste. Maure, Manthelan, and other communes where they exist, since experience has proved that they form a very excellent natural manure.

Loches was as a loadstone constantly drawing us towards it. Yet we felt that neither the *faluns* nor the Château de Grillemont ought to be passed by without notice, especially as both were on the main road and could be included in the day's excursion without encroaching on the time necessary for seeing that ancient town.

Grillemont is a fifteenth century château near La Chapelle-Blanche, some seven miles from Ligueil; it is a plain but distinctly dignified building with three solid, lofty towers, only one of which retains its machicolations; and it is situated in the midst of a somewhat deserted country, whose unattractiveness, however, is relieved, in the immediate neighbourhood of the castle, by the presence of woods. As in the case of the house in the Rue Briçonnet, at Tours, local tradition attributes its construction to Tristan l'Hermite. But that is an error. It received its name from Raoul de Grillemont, who lived in 1086, and who was the first known owner of the estate,

and its builder was Bertrand de Lescouet, the son of Roland de Lescouet, Master of the Hounds to the King of France. It is supposed to have been built between 1465 and 1470. François Balthazar Dangé d'Orsay, councillor and secretary to Louis xv, owned it in 1739, and he it was who, at a cost of £12,000, restored and modified it. He destroyed a keep in order to make the present courtyard, and he changed almost the entire interior of the château to the style of his period, a style which is best exemplified by the drawing-room with its carved woodwork and by the staircase with its wrought-iron balustrade. The present owner, Comte P. Lecointre, undertook, with the aid of M. Guérin, an architect of Tours, a second restoration, but without interfering, happily, with the architecture of this fine building. Its sole interest, in the absence of an eventful history, lies in its architecture.

I am afraid that our *chauffeur*, after we had said good-bye to the Château de Grillemont, wilfully infringed the regulations as to speed, for he took us from La Chapelle-Blanche to Loches, a distance of thirteen miles, in a little over fifteen minutes. Conscience and a wholesome fear of accidents



THE DRAWING-ROOM AT GRILLEMONT



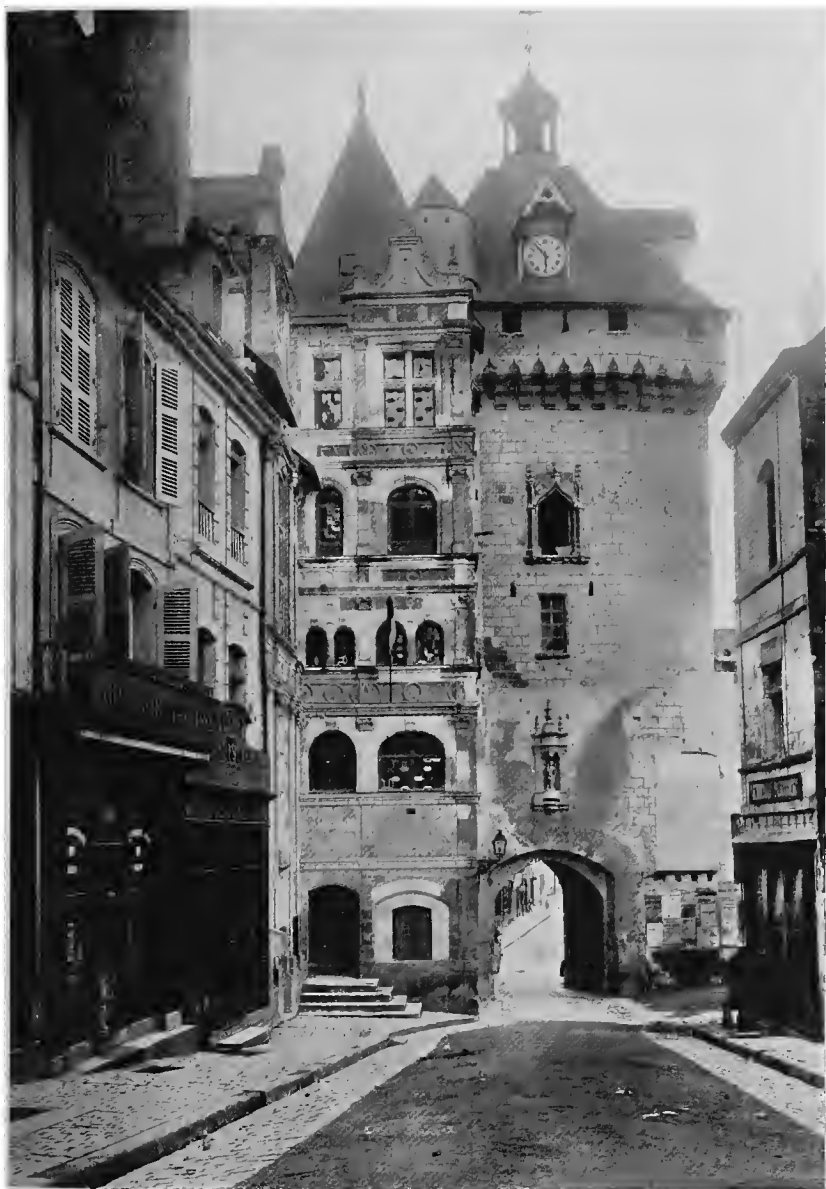
THE STAIRCASE AT GRILLEMONT

would as a rule have prompted us to repress him ; but we were anxious to get to our destination, and he had so accurately read our thoughts that we allowed him for once to have his own way. Loches had been painted for us in the most glowing colours. "The most fascinating old town in central France ; the one which has the most surprises in store for you ; the one which makes the deepest impression, and which, consequently, is remembered the longest,"—had been some one's estimate ; and, though a trifle suspicious, through past disappointments, of other people's descriptions, it had keenly excited our curiosity.

On reaching the old town of the left bank of the Indre, it was a most agreeable surprise to us to find that our informer had erred on the side of moderation. I have a difficulty, indeed, in praising Loches too highly. There are certainly more interesting things to be seen there than in any other small town we visited in Touraine. In its quaint, narrow, irregular streets, winding up the hillside towards the ruins of the castle which crown the summit, ancient buildings are met with

every few yards; and all are so good that one can hardly say which is the best. Half a day was all we could devote to Loches, so, in order to economise time, we saw its attractions in the order in which we found them, beginning with the Porte des Cordeliers, a turreted and machicolated gateway of the fifteenth century at the end of the Rue de la Filature, and ending up with the Collegiate Church and the Château Royal. Passing beneath this gateway—one of the principal former defences of the town—we quickly came to a tower, the Tour St. Antoine, which strongly reminded us of Tours, in as much as it is the only remaining tower of a church which was built, between 1519 and 1530, in imitation of the Cathedral of St. Gatien, and also because of a certain resemblance it has to the solitary Tour de l'Horloge and the Tour Charlemagne. The Renaissance is very well represented in Loches. Not far from the Tour St. Antoine are several sixteenth century houses, particularly in the Grande Rue, which leads direct to the two most noteworthy, the Hôtel de Ville and the Chancellerie. The former adjoins the Porte Picoys, another of the gateways with which





THE TOWN HALL AT LOCHES



the triple fortifications of the town were provided by Charles VII, and it was built between 1535 and 1543, under the orders of André Sourdeau and Bernard Musnier, at a cost of about 3800 livres tournois. The latter, which is in the steep, narrow street leading to the castle, dates from 1551, during the reign of Henry II, and is ornamented with a good deal of fairly well-preserved sculpture and royal mottoes.

Another ancient gateway, at the top and to the left of the Rue du Château, leads into the Rue Foulques Nerra and thence to a shady avenue at the end of which is the entrance to the castle. A gigantic keep, surrounded by a complicated system of defensive works, whose history forms the greater part of that of Loches itself, towers above the trees of this miniature boulevard with the menacing air it has retained during more than eight hundred years. It was built in the twelfth century on the solid basis of one of the masterpieces of that redoubtable builder of donjons, Fulk the Black. Seemingly impregnable, it was taken time after time, though it by no means invariably fell into the hands of besiegers, not even into those of the

fifteenth century. John Lackland, taking a mean advantage of his brother's captivity, got possession of it, but had quickly to give it up in 1194 when Richard Cœur de Lion returned to France. In 1204, after a siege which lasted a year, it was captured by Philip Augustus from Robert de Turneham and Girard d'Athée, and was given, with the town, to Dreux de Mello, in recognition of services rendered to the State by his father, the former Constable of France. St. Louis, however, purchased it for an annuity of 600 livres forty-five years later, and henceforth Loches and its castle were crown property.

But for all that it continued to be the scene of much strife. The English, who had taken the Abbey of Beaulieu, on the opposite bank of the Indre, made a vain attempt to enter the town in 1412. Burgundians and Armagnacs, in 1420, quarrelled as to who should own the château, and as a result burnt down the town. Charles VII rebuilt it, and at the same time surrounded it with walls and fortified gateways. His successor, Louis XI, devoted his attention to strengthening the castle, not with the view of preventing his enemies from breaking

into it—a step which the boldest would have shrunk from taking—but in order to prevent them getting out of it, once he had placed them there. The Tour Ronde, a large cylindrical tower to the right of the keep, was built to his orders, its upper rooms being placed at the disposal of favoured prisoners, whilst the lowest cell of all—a circular dungeon with a vaulted roof hidden away in the foundations and lit by the most depressing *meurtrières* I have ever seen—was given to those who had particularly incurred the sovereign's displeasure. From the roof of this underground prison was suspended one of the cages which Louis had amused himself by inventing, and the manufacture of which he watched with grim pleasure in the three forges he had had established at the castle in 1479. These cages, which were sometimes made of iron and sometimes of wood covered with sheets of iron both inside and out, were seven to eight feet long and about the same in height, though some are said to have been much smaller,—too small, indeed, to allow the occupant either to stand up or to lie down. Historians have found references to at least nine distinct

*cages de fer*, but probably a very much larger number existed at one time. That used at Loches was for many years occupied by Cardinal La Balue, after he had first been imprisoned at Plessis-les-Tours, in consequence of his having sold Louis' secrets to the Duke of Burgundy. It was destroyed in 1790.

The cells of the Tour Ronde are, however, the least impressive of the terrible prisons of the Castle of Loches. The real *cachots* are under the foundations of a fifteenth century building called the Martelet, now in ruins, and they consist of cell below cell, cut out of the solid rock : the upper ones faced with masonry fourteen feet thick and provided with loopholes ; the lower ones almost as dark and certainly as silent as a tomb. In one of the latter, reached by descending a narrow winding staircase with thirty-seven steps, there was imprisoned for nine years the one time Duke of Milan, Ludovic Sforza, whom La Trémouille had taken prisoner in the name of Louis XII. How monotonous those years must have been is clear from the rude paintings, designs, and inscriptions with which the wretched man covered the walls and part of the ceiling. On the wall

opposite the one narrow loophole that provides the cell with air is engraved a rude sundial, by means of which he hoped to keep track of time ; here and there is his portrait, or the Cordelier which those of his house adopted from St. Francis of Assisi ; and on all sides are lines and verses depicting, with poignant accuracy, his varying states of mind as the years rolled on. "Celui qui ne craint fortune," he has painted, in large letters, when in a philosophic mood, "n'est pas bien saige." In a similar spirit, he wrote the following :

"JE COGNAIS BIEN QUE PLVSIEVRS SONT DE CEVX EN CA  
 QUE TANT CVIDA  
 A QUI SOVEDAIN VNG BEAILLE CONGE  
 QUE VEVL TVER SON CHIEN ON LVI MET SVS  
 N . SAV . SAN . N .  
 DE ESTRE ENRAGE  
 AINSI ESTRE DE LA POVRE PERSONNE  
 QUE ON VEVT HAÏR . SEE . XCV ."

"I know well that there are many, and it is a sharp grief,  
 To whom one gives their dismissal.  
 Who wishes to kill his dog first imputes to him the  
 charge of being mad,  
 So it is with the poor man  
 That one wishes to hate."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted for the following translations of the inscriptions and verses at Loches to Mrs. Watts-Jones' article, entitled "Thoughts in Prison," in the *English Illustrated Magazine* for 1891.

His verse shows more impatience, and there is sometimes a reproachful ring in it which makes one wish that Louis, whose claim to the throne of Milan was, as a matter of fact, invalid, had displayed a little more generosity towards him :

“JE . MEN . REPENS . CELA . NE . VAVLT . RIEN .  
 CAR . IAI . VOVLV . IONDRE . MON CVEVR . AV . TIEN .  
 POVR . MON . PLAISIR ET . TV . LVI . FAICTZ LA . GVERRE  
 SI . NE . TE . DOIS . DESORMAIS . PLVS . REQVERRE .  
 QVANT . VOVLENTE . ME . FAIRE . AVLVCN . BIEN .  
 TROP . DE PEINE . EVX . A . TROVVER . LE . MOIEN .  
 PARLER . A . TOI . CHERCHANT . TON . ENTRETIEN .  
 QUE . JAI . TROVVE . DIFICILE . A . CONQVERE .”

“I do repent, but what is that to thee?  
 My heart I would have joinèd unto thine,  
 But thou mad'st war upon this heart of mine.  
 Naught ask I henceforth, never seek thy face,  
 Since thou to me wouldst show no slightest grace;  
 Yet for that bliss I strove with greater pain—  
 To see thee once—to speak with thee again—  
 Than o'er my foe to gain the victory.”

Despair, too, is the note in the following touching lines :

“QUANT . MORT . ME . ASSAVLT . ET . QVE . IE . NE . PVIS .  
 MOVRIE .  
 ET . SECOVRIR . ON . NE . ME . VEVLV . MAIS . ME FAIRE .  
 RVDESSE .  
 ET . DE . LIESSE . ME . VOIR . BANNIR . QVE . DOIS . JE .  
 PLVS . QVERIR .  
 JA . NEST . BESOIN . MA DAME . REQVERIR . POVR . ME . GVERIR .  
 NE . POVRCHASSER . AVOIR . AVTRE .”





LOCHES



“When death assails me and I cannot die,  
 And none brings help, but rudeness and disdain,  
 And joy is banished, then what hope have I?  
 My lady cannot come to cure my pain  
 Nor can I seek another.”

After nine years' captivity he was given more cheerful quarters in an upper room of the Martelet tower, and there, in 1510, in the tenth year of his imprisonment, he died of joy on hearing that at last he was to be released.

Ludovic Sforza's reflections and lamentations are by no means the only ones you can read in the prisons of Loches. There is perhaps not a single one of their walls that does not reverberate a note either of anger, or sorrow, or despair. The earliest inscription is dated 1417 and is in parts undecipherable; the latest was scratched by a revolutionary in 1785 and prophesies the early destruction of the castle walls, the breaking of prison chains, and the abolition of “ces tortures inventées par les Rois—trop faibles pour arrêter un peuple qui veut sa liberté.” The prophecy was partly fulfilled, but before it was how many had been forced to respond to that ironical invitation written on the wall of a passage leading to the

Tour Ronde : "Entrés, messieurs, chez le roy nostre mestre" ! Even Philippe de Commynes, who, during the minority of Charles VIII, had offended the Lady of Beaujeu, was one of those who suffered imprisonment in the castle. He is supposed to be the author of the words "Dixisse me aliquando penitvit tacuisse nunquam,"—"I have sometimes repented for having spoken, never for having kept silent,"—which are beautifully engraved in one of the cells. In another prison is a Dutch inscription of the fifteenth century declaring that

"Money, malice, might,  
Overcome law and right";

and in the same *cachot* is the following verse in Catalanian, written by a prisoner of the same period :

"He who sighs hath never known . . .  
Come within these walls of stone !  
Here not only shall he sigh,  
He shall groan in misery.  
Sweeter far were it to die  
Than in torment thus to lie.  
Drear is death, yet far more drear,  
Day by day to languish here.

. . . . .  
The best of remedy in all our ill,  
Is, seek the good within that none may kill."

After leaving the castle we visited part of its moat, which has been transformed into a profitable market-garden by Monsieur L. César. Gardener and explorer are the titles to which this amiable Lochois lays claim, for he takes a pride alike in the growing of fruit and vegetables and in the discovery of subterranean passages. On January 1, 1892, a turn of his spade brought to light the opening of a secret gallery which was built in the eleventh century for the purpose of revictualling the keep, and he has since opened it up to a length of more than two hundred yards. Archæology and gardening, he says, go admirably together. "I never know, in digging for potatoes, what treasure I may come across, what valuable addition I may make to my already well-stocked museum of curiosities."

The Collegiate Church of St. Ours can be seen whilst on your way to the Château Royal. To students of architecture it is an exceedingly interesting little building, since it is a composition of various styles dating from the tenth to the seventeenth centuries. In the porch there is even a specimen of Roman work: a cylindrical altar, made of a single block of stone,

ornamented with rudely carved figures of warriors, and now used as a holy-water stoup.

With this church is associated the name of Agnes Sorel. For many years she lived at Beaulieu, and at her death in 1450 she expressed a wish to be buried in the Collegiate. Her tomb, made of black marble, on which is a most charming statue of herself in white marble, representing her with folded hands and with a little kneeling angel on either side of her head, was, accordingly, placed in the choir. But in 1777 the Chapter, shocked at the idea of her ashes being in that place, had them removed with the tomb to the nave, and thence, a little later, to one of the towers of the Château Royal, where you can still see this beautiful work of art. Approaching but not quite equalling it in beauty is the Oratory of Anne of Brittany, characteristically ornamented with ermines and *cordelières*. These and the enormous chestnut tree, which is said to have been planted by Francis I, are the most noteworthy things at the Logis du Roi, as the château is sometimes called. As to the building itself, which was inhabited by Charles VII, Louis XI, Charles VIII, and

Louis XII, all of whom had a hand in its construction, it did not greatly impress us when viewed from the grounds, now those of the sub-prefecture of the Indre-et-Loire. To see it to the best advantage you must stand on the Grand Mail, where you get a true idea of its position on the hillside, at whose base lie the quaint gray houses of Loches and the many branches of the sluggish Indre.

## CHAPTER XI

### MONTRÉSOR AND ITS TREASURE

AN irregular line of white houses, surrounded by gardens and orchards, lies on the side of a sunlit hill ; a graceful château stands on the summit, protected by the ivy-covered walls and towers of a castle of feudal times ; and an irreproachably limpid little river, gemmed with white and yellow water-lilies, slowly meanders through a vine-clad valley. Such are the essential features of Montrésor, which is on the right bank of the Indrois, a tributary of the Indre, some fourteen miles to the west of Loches ; and on a sunny summer morning, especially when the orchards are white with blossom, or when the fruit is reddening on the tree, they form an unforgettable landscape.

Montrésor ! Did village ever receive a prettier name ? How it awakens your expectation on hearing it for the first time,



and how delightful a picture it calls up in the minds of those who have been there whenever it is repeated in after years ! Place names are not, as a rule, the safest of guides to the natural characteristics of localities ; but in the case of Montrésor the appellation is singularly appropriate. Philologically it has, of course, nothing to do with either natural beauties or a buried treasure, though legend, which tells a pretty tale about King Gontran falling asleep on the banks of a stream, with his head on the knees of his shield-bearer, and dreaming of a grotto containing untold wealth, which he secured through the assistance of a miraculous lizard, puts in a claim for the latter derivation. It is derived, say some philologists, from the words “Mons Thesauri,” its name from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, and it was so called because it was then the property of the Treasury of the Cathedral of Tours. “Unless,” say others, “it comes from Mont tréhort, tressort, or trésort,—that is to say, the hill with three *cort*, or *hort*, which means enceinte. In our opinion, the reference to the triple fortifications which crown the hill is palpable.” The former explanation is most probably the correct one, but since it

is always possible to point triumphantly to the fortified hill, I suppose there will never be wanting some one to take the opposite view. The fortifications of the Château of Montrésor are a very substantial reality, and form an excellent basis for a weak argument. You see the first of them on following the winding village street and on coming face to face with the stout outer wall of the old castle. The second is not apparent until you have passed through the modern entrance, made in what was once part of the castle itself, and are within the grounds. The third is the later château, which, in spite of its machicolated towers and its thick walls, was built, however, more with the idea of it serving as a residence than as a place to resist an enemy's attacks.

It is difficult to say who laid the foundations of the older castle. There was a Lord of Montrésor as early as 887, and he had a stronghold somewhere on the hill above the valley of the Indrois, but whether it had any connection with that which is still partly standing is not made clear by history. Even his name has not been handed down. Perhaps Roger, surnamed the Petit Diable, who was a strong supporter of Fulk the



VIEW OF THE CHÂTEAU OF MONTRÉSOR ACROSS THE INDRÔIS



MONTRÉSOR: ENTRANCE TO THE CHÂTEAU



AN ANCIENT DOORWAY IN THE INNER  
FORTIFICATIONS OF MONTRÉSOR

Black, had a hand in its construction. At any rate he was one of its early owners. After his day and that of his sons, it was owned by Henry II of England, from whom it was taken, however, in 1188, by Philip Augustus. It next passed to members of the Chauvigny and Palluau families. In 1190, a Chauvigny, André by name, accompanied Richard Cœur de Lion to the Holy Land and fought there with great bravery. At the end of the fourteenth century, the castle belonged to the Beuil family, and one of its members, Jean IV de Beuil, made considerable improvements to the outer wall, the way of the rounds, and the towers. To make the place impregnable, rather than agreeable as a residence, was the ideal of the men of those days.

But the time was drawing near, after the ownership of André de Villequier and his sons, the Lords of La Guerche, and others, when a change was to take place. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, Imbert de Batarnay, the nobleman who then owned it, became dissatisfied with his prison-like castle, and, having had many opportunities, whilst sharing with Jean Bourré and Philippe de Commynes the lifelong confidence of Louis XI,

of educating his taste for such things as fine houses, decided to build a new one. The present château is a portion—unfortunately only a portion—of this fifteenth century building. It originally extended along the entire length of the plateau and it took thirty years to complete. The mutilations which it has undergone were not wholly the work of men of ignorant ages. After passing through the hands of various members of the Batarnay, Bourdeilles, and Beauvillier families, the château was sold, in 1831, to Count Jouffroy-Gonssans, who was responsible for the destruction not only of one of the wings but of a chapel which faced the courtyard to the west of the existing building. That they were in a ruined state is possible, but it is a pity they were not left standing for a few years longer, for they might have been partly, if not wholly restored at the time that Count Xavier Branicki, who became the owner in 1849, undertook the general restoration of the château. To this wealthy Polish gentleman and his nephew, the present Count and owner of Montrésor, is due the credit of having put this historic house into the fine condition in which we find it to-day.

Count Xavier Branicki, aided by the judg-

ment of his wife, did more, however, than repair the château's crumbling architecture. He turned it into a veritable treasure-house of art, and, what is unique among the châteaux of France, French and Italian art devoted to Polish subjects. It was a strange experience, after steeping ourselves in the atmosphere of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance whilst viewing the château from various parts of the grounds, to step into that of the tragic and glorious history of Poland. Nowhere, when once the threshold has been crossed, can you direct your eyes without encountering some object which recalls either the sad or heroic days of that oppressed country. Side by side with Paul Veronese's "Adulterous Wife" is Tony Robert Fleury's "Massacre of the Poles at Warsaw," and on the opposite wall of the same room is a picture representing a cardinal begging Sobieski, the King of Poland, to relieve the city of Vienna. John III is the subject of the majority of the finest of the works of art to be seen at Montrésor.

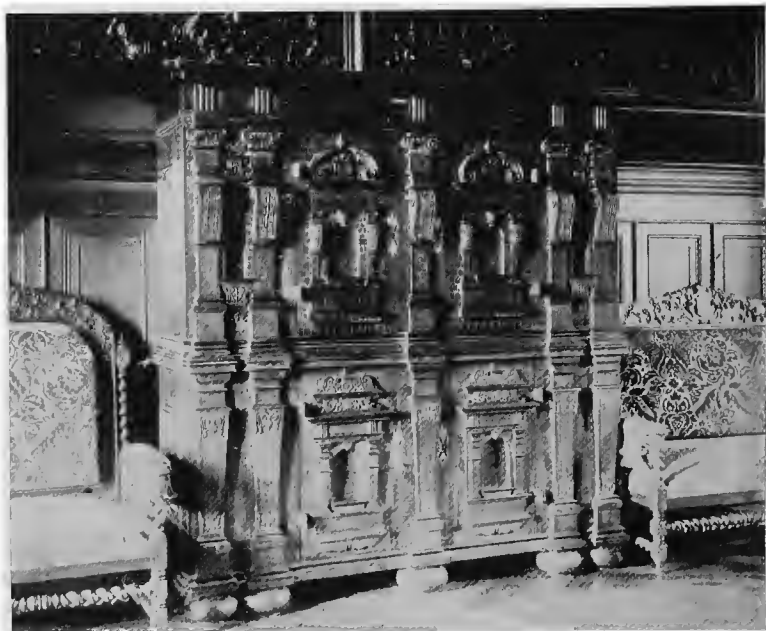
In the drawing-room, above a sixteenth century Italian cabinet, are four magnificently carved oak panels inspired by one of the leading events in the life of that valiant Polish sovereign. The first of these bas-reliefs,

which are from one to two yards in length and about a yard in height, depicts the victory gained by Sobieski over the Turks on September 12, 1683, whereby Europe was saved from the Mohammedans. The rival armies are engaged in a hand to hand struggle around the principal figures of the composition: John III and the Grand Vizir Kara-Mustapha, whose head is about to be cleft in twain by his royal adversary's upraised sabre. Sobieski's triumphal entry into Vienna is the subject of the second panel. Wearing his crown and royal mantle, the King advances towards the city across the battlefield strewn with dead and wounded. He is accompanied by his chief supporters, amongst others Prince Maximilian of Bavaria, Prince George of Saxony, and Prince Louis of Baden. The third bas-relief shows the victor's apotheosis. Sobieski, who is dressed like a Roman emperor, is being crowned by two women, one of whom holds a palm, the other a branch of laurel. The throne on which he stands upright, with his left hand resting on a shield bearing his national arms, is supported by five Turkish prisoners, who are attempting to break their chains; and the background, against which his imposing figure stands out,





MONTRÉSOR: THE DRAWING-ROOM



A SIXTEENTH CENTURY ITALIAN CABINET AT THE CHÂTEAU OF  
MONTRÉSOR



THE DINING-ROOM

consists of St. Peter's, representing Christian Rome, and the statues of Bacchus and Pluto, symbolising ancient Rome,—the two cities in one which he saved from the infidel. As spectators, and as it were sanctioning his coronation, are two figures, representing Heaven and Earth, one on either side of the throne, and, near them, a Roman soldier, who is wrapt in admiration. The fourth panel completes the series in a very appropriate manner by showing within medallions, supported by allegorical figures, the portraits of John III and a young man with long flowing hair, holding in his hand a commander's staff. The latter is thought by some to be that Prince Eugene who fought under Sobieski at Vienna, and who became a field-marshal in 1687 at the early age of twenty-four. These beautiful works were produced by Pierre Vaneau, a native of Montpellier, where he was born on December 31, 1653. He was a *protégé* of Mgr. de Béthune, Bishop of Le Puy, and was also commissioned to do many carvings (most if not all of them dealing with the exploits of Sobieski) for the princes of Poland. The Branicki family possess other works of his at their Château of Villanof, near Warsaw.

Priceless as these four panels are, they

do not constitute, however, *the* treasure of Montrésor. This is kept in a room adjoining the drawing-room, to the right of the fireplace, on either side of which, by the bye, we noticed family portraits by Ary Scheffer. The entrance is hidden and cannot be discovered, even though the woodwork of the corner be examined ever so carefully. Only those who are in the secret know which part of the wainscot can be slipped aside and the keyhole disclosed to view. Then, when the key is inserted and turned in the lock, a portion of the panelling gives way, swings silently and heavily on its hinges, like the door of a safe, and allows you to pass through a many-feet-thick wall into a chamber which will hold at the most but half a dozen people. It is lit by a small and jealously guarded window, and against its walls stand the glasscases which contain the solid gold plate of the kings of Poland. Solomon's golden vessels and those of the house of the forest of Lebanon made, surely, no finer show than these plates and vases and goblets ornamented with exquisite designs, and bearing, generally in company with the crown and eagle of Poland, the names

of the sovereigns to whom they belonged. There is a salt-cellar incrustated with medals which stood on the table of Sigismund the Great at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and which, owing to the beauty of its workmanship, is attributed to Benvenuto Cellini. A plateau, decorated with sixteen medals, bearing the effigy of Sigismund II, dates from 1564; a larger one, resembling it in shape and ornamentation, from 1628, in which year it was made for Sigismund III, as can be seen from his portrait and monogram, an interlaced S and T (*Sigismundus Tertius*), on each medallion. The cylindrical vases are Nuremberg work of the seventeenth century. On the seventeen medals with which two of these are enriched are the profiles of Sigismund III, his son Ladislas IV, who came to the throne in 1632, Duke George of Saxony, Queen Christina of Sweden, and Frederic John Langerhans, a German nobleman. Similarly, a beer mug of pure gold recalls Ladislas IV, Ferdinand I and Ferdinand II, the emperors of Germany, and the first Centenary of the Reform. The spoons, forks, and knives, all made of the same precious metal, with the exception of the blades of the last

named, also bear witness to their original owner's desire for the richest work that the goldsmith could produce. But what is the glory of all these objects compared with that of the principal piece of the collection — Sobieski's soup-tureen? Here, indeed, is a piece of plate worthy of being set before a king! Its huge size, its beauty of workmanship, and its historical value combine to make it a work of unique interest. It was the gift which the city of Vienna made to John III in 1683 in recognition of his victory over the Turks. Four bas-reliefs depict the part played by the great soldier in that momentous struggle. One represents the meeting of the Polish chiefs when they decided to go to the aid of Austria; another, Sobieski's arrival; the third, the fight under the walls of the capital; and the fourth, the interview between the King of Poland and the Emperor Leopold after the battle. With great appropriateness, the legs supporting the tureen bear the arms of the leading chiefs of the Polish army. The cover is surmounted by a statuette of Sobieski, in addition to being ornamented with his portrait and that of Leopold I.

That a treasure of this importance (its artistic and historical value is any sum you like to name provided it is not lower than £400,000, whilst its intrinsic worth is perhaps about half that amount)—that a treasure of this importance, I repeat, should have aroused a feeling of covetousness in the heart of a dishonest visitor to the Château of Montrésor is not at all surprising. Twenty years ago a daring attempt was made to steal it. The village locksmith, into whose jovial company we had the good luck to fall after leaving the castle, gave us a full account of the robbery; and that he was well qualified to do so is evident from the part he played soon after its discovery, for he it was who was called in to provide the treasure-room with its present ingeniously concealed and armour-plated door, and that complicated system of electric burglar alarms which are believed to be proof against the smartest cracksman who ever used a jemmy. The precautions taken twenty years ago to guard the treasure were, he said, practically nil. The guardian whose duty it was to look after it at night-time was notoriously fond of the bottle, and the nearer midnight

approached the less capable he was, as a rule, of answering for his faculties. The treasure-room door presented not the slightest difficulty to the veriest tyro in burglary. And as to electric or other alarms to doors and windows, they were, of course, unheard of in that part of the country in those days. This state of unpreparedness naturally attracted the attention of those who are ever on the look-out for easy cribs to crack. One summer day a stranger arrived in the village and took up his residence at one of the inns, where he announced his intention of stopping for a few days "to study the antiquities of the district." Archæology was his passion. He made long excursions in the neighbourhood in search of ancient buildings, such as the ruins of the Château of Villiers, to the south of the village; he meditated over the beauties of the Collegiate Church of Montrésor; and he went into ecstasies over the château and the castle, whose walls—and especially those on the side where the treasure-room is situated—he was noticed to examine with all the love of a born antiquarian. The treasure itself, too, interested him not a little, as was



observed on the one public occasion on which he was remembered to have visited it. Early one morning, some three or four days after his arrival, the big bell of the château sounded the alarm. Taking advantage of the more than usually copious libations in which the guardian had indulged over night, some one who had evidently concealed himself in the château when it was closed for the day, the owners being then absent, had broken into the room containing the treasure and had made his escape through the narrow window with several of the most precious pieces of the collection. In case he was disturbed during his operations, he had prepared to sell his life dearly. Nearly all the weapons above the mantelpiece and on the walls had been removed and distributed in various parts of the drawing-room, so that wherever he might be, if surprised and driven into a corner, a dagger or a sabre would be within reach of his arm. Suspicion, in the mind of the now thoroughly sobered guardian, fell upon the stranger of antiquarian tastes, and, as he was missing from his inn, a hue and cry was set up after him. He had several hours' start. Had he lived in

the days of motor-cars that would have been ample to have enabled him to get away not only with what he had in his possession, but with the entire gold plate of the kings of Poland. But he had only his legs to carry him to Loches, so had to face the inevitable. Two detectives met him on the bridge in that ancient town and taxed him with the robbery. He blandly protested. Protest was, however, useless. They opened his coat—suspiciously bulky—and there, one under each arm, were the golden plateaus of the two Sigismunds. He was sentenced, some months later, to twenty years' penal servitude.

Before leaving Montrésor to return to Loches and continue our travels along the valley of the Indre we visited the beautiful Collegiate Church which was founded by Imbert de Batarnay early in the sixteenth century. Its exterior is particularly remarkable for a fine entrance with bas-reliefs representing scenes in the life of Christ; its interior, for the still more charming tomb of the Batarnays, a rectangular tomb ornamented with statuettes of the apostles in niches, and bearing the couchant statues of Imbert de Batarnay,

Georgette de Montchenu, his wife, and François, their son. Some historians have said that the third statue is that of Claude de Batarnay, who, wounded at the battle of St. Denis, died in Paris on November 18, 1567, in his twenty-second year. But that is an error. There is no document to prove that other remains than his heart were brought back to Montrésor, and this, as we know, was placed in a marble urn in the church of his ancestors. It is now in a little oratory at the top of one of the towers of the château. For our special benefit the heavy lid of this urn was removed, the box inside was taken out, and the heart of the young captain was placed in our hands. It was a rare sensation,—one we would not willingly have missed. To think that that misshapen ruddy mass, dried and hardened by more than three hundred years of repose in its faintly fragrant sepulchre, had once throbbed with the quick-flowing blood of a young man !

## CHAPTER XII

### IN THE VALLEY OF THE INDRE: FROM MONTBAZON TO RIGNY-USSÉ

BALZAC'S well-known description, in *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, of the valley of the Indre has the defect which one would expect to find in the work of a native of Touraine,—a defect, moreover, which is inherent in most romances of that kind: it is a little too rose-coloured to be a true picture of Nature.

This valley, “which begins at Montbazon, and ends at the Loire, is,” he says through the mouthpiece of Félix de Vandeness, “a magnificent emerald cup, with the Indre, winding like a serpent, at the bottom. . . . To me, infinite love . . . is expressed by this long ribbon of water, sparkling in the sunlight between two green banks, by these

rows of poplars which adorn this valley of love with their mobile lacework of leaves, by the oak woods which jut out into the vineyards on hillsides round which the river winds ever differently, and by the shaded horizons which fade into the distance. If you would see Nature as beautiful and as virginal as a bride, visit this valley on a spring day; if you would soothe the wounds of your heart, return there during the last days of autumn. . . . At that moment," — the moment when the hero was gazing on the beauties of his favourite landscape,—“the mills of the falls of the Indre lent a voice to this valley quivering with life, the poplars swayed laughingly, the birds warbled, and the cicidas sang. Everything was melodious. And not a cloud obscured the sky. . . . Deeply moved, I descended to the bottom of this basket of flowers, and soon saw a village which, overflowing with poetry as I was, I found without an equal. Imagine three mills set in the midst of graceful, wooded islands,—masses of greenery on a field of water. What other name can I give to that expanse of aquatic vegetation, so vivacious and so finely coloured, which carpets the river,

undulates with it, lends itself to its caprices, and bends before the tempests raised by the mill-wheels? Here and there are masses of gravel against which the water breaks, forming fringes in which the sun sparkles. Daffodils, white and yellow water-lilies, rushes and phlox decorate the banks with their magnificent carpets. A decayed and trembling bridge, with flower-covered piers, and hand-rails which, overgrown with weeds and velvety mosses, lean over the river and yet do not fall; worn out boats and fishermen's nets; the monotonous song of a shepherd; the ducks which swim about among the islands, or preen their feathers on the *jard*, the name given to the rough sand drifted by the Loire; and miller-boys, with their caps stuck on the sides of their heads, loading their mules: each of these details made the scene surprising in its naïveté. Imagine, beyond the bridge, two or three farms, a dovecote, some turtle-doves, and thirty tumble-down cottages, separated by gardens and by hedges of honeysuckle, jessamine, and clematis; imagine a flowered manure-heap before every door, and cocks and hens in every road,—and you have the village of Pont de Ruan before you. . . .



THE RUINS OF MONTEAZON





Frame the whole with ancient walnut trees and young poplars with pale golden leaves, place a few graceful manufactories in the midst of those extensive fields which fade into the distance under a hot and vaporous sky,—and you will be able to form an idea of one of the thousand points of view in this beautiful district.”

Unless the valley of the Indre has lost a good deal of its picturesqueness since Balzac's day, and I doubt if it has much changed during the last sixty to seventy years, his estimate of its beauty is certainly exaggerated. Following it from Montbazon to Rigny-Ussé, we had countless opportunities of noting its characteristics, which are those of any pleasant little valley, watered by a pretty meandering stream. Do not be led, therefore, through the idealism of the author of *Le Lys dans la Vallée* to expect too much; and remember that he was a Tourangeau.

Montbazon is interesting principally on account of its ruined, ivy-covered castle, whose square keep, which was built by Fulk the Black in 988, is one of the most curious of the military buildings of the tenth century in this part of France. It

stands on a hill overlooking the village and the valley, and is an essentially picturesque feature of the landscape as, travelling along the road from Cormery, it gradually comes into view. But it would be even more picturesque without the incongruous bronze statue of the Virgin which some devout Catholic has had placed on the highest point of the keep. Intended to be a perpetual inspirer of pious thoughts, I am afraid that in our case it failed in its object ; for our minds were wholly occupied with the exploits of the builder of the fortress and with the romantic story of the beautiful Duchess of Montbazon, Marie de Bretagne, the second wife of Hercule de Rohan. With Fulk you are already sufficiently well acquainted, but I dare say that the name of the lady is heard by you for the first time. She was celebrated for two things : her utter disregard of morality, and her ideal beauty. The former caused Cardinal de Retz to say of her : "I have never met a person who showed in the practice of vice so little respect for virtue ;" the latter turned the heads of innumerable lovers. One of her greatest admirers, and the one with whom her name is usually

connected, was the Abbé de Rancé, who was fifteen years younger than herself, and whom she had brought up with her own children from the age of nine. His sorrow at her death from fever on April 28, 1656, was so great that he withdrew to a Trappist monastery for the remainder of his life. The scene of their amour was the Château de Couzières, which stands a little more than a mile to the north-east of Montbazon, on the right bank of the Indre. A visit there is not absolutely essential, but when you are so near it is just as well perhaps to include Couzières in your programme. It was partly built during the first half of the seventeenth century on the foundations of an older château, and, as an inscription on a marble tablet informed us, it has an historical as well as a romantic interest, since it was there, on September 5, 1619, that the interview between Louis XIII and Marie de' Medici took place, an interview which resulted in the confirmation of the treaty of Angoulême and the momentary reconciliation of mother and son.

Both Montbazon and Couzières are, however, but an introduction to the castles and country-houses of the valley of the Indre.

More important châteaux, including two which rank with the finest in Touraine, lie farther down stream, and to these we hastened. A few miles' run brought us to Monts and the first of this succession of noteworthy residences: the Château de Candé, which, standing on the top of a hill, in full view of the valley and the imposing viaduct which crosses it at this point, enjoys a position that could not well be finer. This beautiful house was built by François Briçonnet early in the sixteenth century. He was Mayor of Tours and came of a family of able men, one of them a cardinal. A second holder of that position, Charles Mesnager, owned the château in 1542, and from the hands of his daughter Catherine, the widow of François Péguineau, it passed, in 1556, to Guillaume Bertrand. The new owner kept it, however, only eight years, for he resold it in 1564 to Victor Brodeau, whose descendants were to retain it for one hundred and fifty years. The Brodeau family prided itself on its descent from that Jean Brodeau who fought and died at the siege of St. Jean d'Acre, and its members on that account were authorised by Philip Augustus to use as their arms "a cross crosslet and three palms," which you can see on the fireback in the drawing-



THE CHÂTEAU DE CANDE FROM THE PARK



THE CHÂTEAU DE CANDÉ FROM THE GARDEN



DRAWING-ROOM AT THE CHÂTEAU DE CANDÉ

room. After May 16, 1715, when the château passed out of the Brodeau family, it became, successively, the property of the Anguille de la Niverdière, Pouget de Montsoudun, and Caron de Fleury families, and was finally bought, in 1853, by the present owner, M. Drake del Castillo. This gentleman undertook its restoration and has improved it in a hundred ways. In addition, he has filled his house with valuable art objects and pictures. The admirable fire-dogs in the drawing-room are attributed to Benvenuto Cellini. Above the mantelpiece, which is a finely carved copy of one at Bruges, stands a unique bronze bust of Louis XII. And the pictures in the same room include works by Van der Velde and Léopold Robert.

At your next stopping-place, Azay-le-Rideau, you would do well to linger, as we did, for the greater part of a day. An entire afternoon is none too long to devote to this superb château and its delightful surroundings : a diamond in an emerald setting.

There is an account of how the Château of Azay-le-Rideau came to be built in Balzac's *Contes Drolatiques*, but it has nothing whatever in common with a book of travel. Mere historical accuracy is a feature of

secondary consideration in those joyous Rabelaisian tales. Nevertheless, for the sake of a few happy descriptive phrases, which show how much the great writer loved the building that he elsewhere calls a “diamant taillé à facettes, serti par l’Indre, monté sur des pilotis masqués de fleurs,” some lines from his amusing *nouvelle* “Comment feut basty le Chateau d’Azay” are worth quoting :—

“At that time”—that is, in the days of Jacques de Beaune’s supposed meeting with the Lady of Beaujeu—he writes, “the Château of Chenonceaux was being built by Messire Bohier, the Minister of Finances, who, as a novelty, pretentiously placed his house astride the river Cher. Now, the Baron of Semblançay, wishing to do the very opposite of what the said Bohier had done, boasted of having built *his* mansion on the bed of the Indre, where—the gem of that beautiful green valley—it still stands, so solidly was it constructed on piles. Consequently, Jacques de Beaune, apart from the duty-service of his retainers, spent upon it 30,000 crowns. And thus, forsooth, is this château one of the most graceful and most elaborated of the châteaux of beautiful Touraine ; and thus does it ever bathe in the Indre like a *galloise princièrè*,



adorned with lace-like pavilions and windows, and with pretty soldiers on its weather-cocks, that turn—like all soldiers—whichsoever way the wind blows them.”

This curious name of Azay-le-Rideau has nothing to do with a curtain, but is derived from Hugues Ridet, or Rideau, who was created a knight-banneret in 1213, and who built a castle there to defend the passage of the Indre. The position was an important one from a strategic point of view, and when Jean-sans-Peur seized Tours in 1417 he took care also to place a garrison of three hundred and fifty-four men at Azay. The Burgundian soldiers evidently had a higher opinion of the strength of the fortress than it justified, for they ventured to jeer from its walls at the Dauphin Charles as he passed a year later on his way from Chinon to Tours. Greatly irritated by these insults, the prince at once laid siege to the castle and captured it, in spite of a desperate resistance on the part of the defenders, who knew what they had to expect. Every one of them was hanged, their captain was beheaded, and the castle was razed to the ground. Whether a second castle was built seems doubtful. This, however, is certain : the estate passed

through a number of hands in the course of the next eighty years, and towards the end of the fifteenth century it came into the possession of Jean Berthelot, one of the King's treasurers. His son, Gilles Berthelot, was also a financier, and acquired an immense fortune. Legend says that he was not very particular as to the means by which he obtained his wealth, but much may be forgiven him for the way he employed it, for we owe to him the present château—a masterpiece which is not excelled for grace, delicacy, and harmony by any of the celebrated châteaux of central France. One of the great charms of its peculiar beauty is its exclusively national character. At the time when it was built French art was imbued with the principles of the Renaissance, and was stirred to emulation of the masterpieces of Italy; but that emulation found expression, as we have already seen in the case of Blois, Chambord, and Amboise, in originality, not in an imitation of the work of Rome or Florence. As the château was to be constructed for a man of peace, the architect could give full scope to his fancy, and was not under the necessity of trying to combine the fortress with the dwelling-house. He placed it on an island



A PICTURESQUE CORNER OF AZAY-LE-RIDEAU



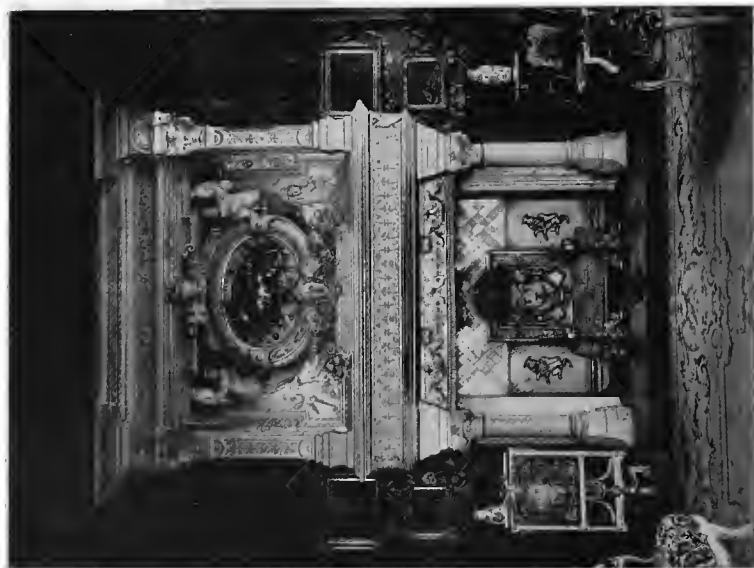
on one of two little branches of the Indre, and this position adds greatly to its picturesqueness. Though ever a beautiful object, it perhaps looks its best in early autumn, when the mellow tints which four centuries have given to the stonework harmonise with the russet hues of the foliage. Lord Leighton once said that the surest proof of the beauty of a work of art was the emotion it created in the mind of the beholder. The test is a severe one, for much, of course, depends upon the æsthetic education of the spectator; but I fancy there are very few people who would be able to restrain an involuntary start of admiration on first catching sight of Azay-le-Rideau across the sunlit, liliated waters of the Indre. There are few works of art in which it is impossible to pick holes, and some superfine critics have objected that Azay-le-Rideau has too much "top-hamper," and would be improved if the roofs, turrets, and machicolations were reduced. But the general opinion is that the building is an almost perfect specimen of Renaissance architecture, and that no alteration would be likely to improve it.

But if equal to any of the other châteaux of Touraine in architectural beauty, Azay-le-

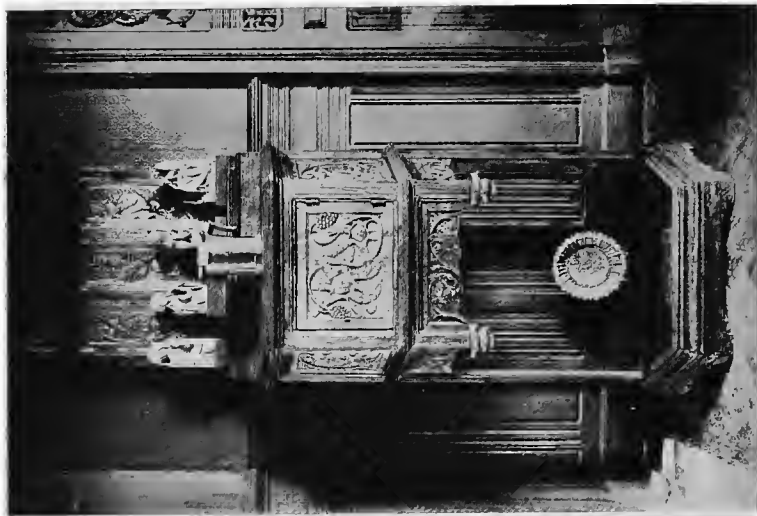
Rideau is inferior to them in respect to historical associations. No tragedies have occurred within its walls; no royal processions of note have marched across its bridge. Kings have, doubtless, crossed its threshold, but they came only to pay a visit of courtesy to the castellan; and history has not recorded any great events in which Azay-le-Rideau played even an unimportant part. Nor does its private history present much interest, except the sad story of its founder. For Gilles Berthelot did not long enjoy the palace he had erected. His cousin, Jacques Semblançay, whom Balzac erroneously states was the builder of Azay, was accused, as treasurer to Francis I, of malversation. The King ordered six commissioners to examine his accounts, and amongst them Gilles Berthelot. Whether he accepted the position with a view to screen or assist his relative, or whether the office was thrust upon him with a view to bring about his downfall, history does not say. It is not improbable that some courtier had coveted poor Berthelot's château, and had plotted to bring about the ruin of its master and the confiscation of his property. At any rate, that is exactly what happened. Semblançay



THE ENTRANCE TO AZAY-LE-RIDEAU



A MANTELPIECE AT AZAY-LE-RIDEAU



A RENAISSANCE CABINET AT AZAY-LE-RIDEAU



was executed, his sons were banished, and, very soon afterwards, Berthelot himself received a hint that he, too, might swing on the gibbet at Montfaucon. He fled to Metz and so saved his life, but soon learned that his goods were confiscated and his château had been bestowed on Antoine Raffin, the captain of a hundred men of 'King Francis' guard. The loss of this beautiful dwelling was more than he could bear, and he is said to have died of a broken heart.

Antoine Raffin evinced his gratitude to his royal benefactor by placing a salamander over the door of the château and on various other parts of the building, both inside and out. Whether he long enjoyed the estate I know not, for no one, not even the erudite Abbé Chevalier, has had the time or the patience to search out the names of the many owners of the château during the last three centuries.

The more recent history of Azay-le-Rideau is better known. Some thirty to forty years ago its owner was the Marquis de Biencourt, and he it was who began its restoration. Time had dealt kindly with the château and added more beauty than it had destroyed. The carved doors at the entrance, as his

initial upon them shows, date from his ownership ; so also do the restored medallions of the kings and queens of France—defaced during the Revolution—on the ceiling of the staircase. These carvings were the work of M. Bernard Depont, a sculptor of considerable talent, who carried out many commissions for similar work in the châteaux of Touraine, notably at Comacré and at Réaux. He was a son of the official sculptor at the Court of Saxe-Weimar, and on settling down at Azay, about the middle of the last century, quickly gained a widespread reputation for being a skilful worker in wood and in stone. Some of his carvings went to England, where, at the residence of Sir Watkin Williams, they are doubtless still to be seen.

In the Marquis de Biencourt's day, the château was full of splendid furniture and fine pictures. There came a time, however,—it was on the occasion of the failure of the Union Générale,—when these had to be dispersed. One of the sideboards was sold for more than £3000, and is now, I am told, in the Louvre ; a bedstead dating from the reign of Francis was presented to the Cluny Museum.

Azay-le-Rideau then fell upon evil days. It came into the hands of speculators. One of its temporary owners—or perhaps he was merely the tenant—attempted to turn it into a school for young English aristocrats ; but the experiment ended in a wholly unforeseen manner, after it had been open only one summer. On returning, one day, from Tours, where they had been allowed to spend an afternoon of perfect freedom, the pupils were in such high spirits that nothing would satisfy them but to cast most of the furniture out of the windows !

Judging by the poor furniture and still poorer pictures which we found in the château, it had never been refurnished since that day of destruction. It had the air of having been temporarily furnished in view of the arrival of some prospective American purchaser. In fact, the official guide remarked to us : “ If only a wealthy American would buy Azay, as Chenonceaux was bought by M. Terry, then we should see it worthily embellished.” That much-desired millionaire did not put in an appearance, but a representative of the French Government did, and thus Azay-le-Rideau, as a museum of the Renaissance, under the authority of the

Minister of Fine Arts, will henceforth live over again its palmiest days.

That the French Government—notoriously short of money as it is—should have been able to purchase the Château of Azay-le-Rideau is surprising. As will at once be concluded, it was only owing to exceptional circumstances that it was able to do so. These are worth mentioning.

Two years ago a wealthy connoisseur, named M. Dru, bequeathed his Château de Vez, in the Oise, to the State, on condition that it was classed among the historical monuments of France. He also directed that a sum of 40,000 francs a year be paid out of his fortune to the Government for the restoration and upkeep of his property.

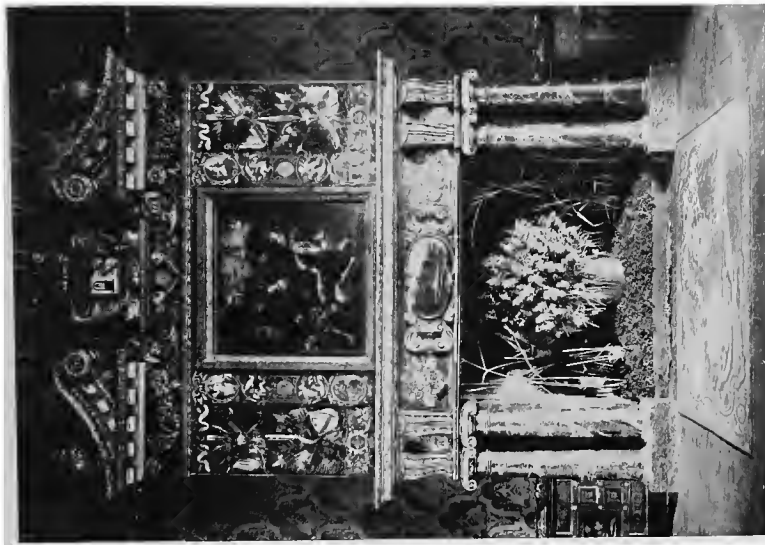
This princely legacy, strange to say, somewhat embarrassed the Department of Fine Arts; for the Château de Vez, although interesting, is not a building of great architectural value, and was in no need of so large a sum as 40,000 francs a year for its maintenance. What was to be done? The question puzzled the authorities for many months, but it was finally solved by M. Dru's heirs making the following proposal, which, needless to say, was immediately accepted:

instead of paying 40,000 francs a year to the State, they offered a lump sum of 1,000,000 francs, 100,000 francs of which was to be expended on the Château de Vez, henceforth to be inhabited by them and kept in thorough order.

It was with 200,000 francs of this 900,000 francs capital that the State purchased Azay-le-Rideau from a M. Artaud. The balance has been invested, so that there will be an income amply sufficient not only for the thorough restoration of the château, but also for its organisation as a museum of the Renaissance. Already much has been done towards those ends. The State architects have been busy for some time past in removing modern additions, and in the course of their work have made some interesting discoveries, including an ancient well and *lavabo* on the site of the former kitchens; while several of the rooms have been arranged with works of art from the Louvre and private collections. Among the donors of pictures, tapestries, carved furniture and other works of art are Baron Edmond de Rothschild, Baron Henri de Rothschild, Madame Ernesta Stein, M. Kleinberger, M. Jacques Seligmann, M. Wildenstein and M. Fernand Kalphen.

Whilst at Azay-le-Rideau a walk of less than a mile in the direction of the railway station will bring you to a small sixteenth century château called Islette. This large country-house with stout machicolated towers and high-pitched roofs is also situated on the Indre, and adjoining it is an ancient mill, which is alone worth seeing. Above a doorway, facing the lawn and gardens, is an excellent specimen of Renaissance sculpture. The most interesting work of art in the interior of the château, which the owner most obligingly allowed us to visit, though it is not usually open to the public, is an elaborately painted mantelpiece, the only one of its kind I have seen.

On reaching the terminus of our journey down the valley we met with one of the few *contretemps* of our three months' holiday in Touraine. The Château d'Ussé was closed on that particular day. It was lost labour to explain to the caretaker that we had been misled by the French guide-book which we had taken with us for the sake of its supposed practical information, and to point out that it was really a pity we should have come so far to see merely the outside of the castle. The sole person in



THE PAINTED MANTELPIECE AT THE CHÂTEAU  
DE L'ISLETTE



RENAISSANCE SCULPTURE ABOVE A DOORWAY AT  
ISLETTE



THE CHÂTEAU OF USSÉ



authority, in the absence of her master, the Comte de Blacas, she was obdurate. So we had to be content with a view of the exterior of Ussé, a short walk in its gardens, and a visit to its charming chapel. Fortunately, this was sufficient to satisfy our appetite for beautiful things, and enabled us to forgo with a light heart the splendidly decorated King's bedroom, certain superb mantelpieces, and a fine staircase on which is a picture of St. John attributed to Michael Angelo. The white towers and gray slate roofs of graceful Ussé rise from the greenery of their wooded hillside like those of a château in a fairy-tale. The façades of the Cour d'Honneur, overgrown in parts with creepers, are also very picturesque. This courtyard faces the fine terraces which overlook the Indre, but a few yards wide at this point of its course, and which were built by Marshal de Vauban, whose daughter, Jeanne Françoise, married a member of the Bernin de Valentinay family, to whom the château belonged at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. These terraces form but a very small part of the grounds of Ussé, which are so extensive that the

walls enclosing them are nearly seven miles in circumference. The chapel is a beautiful Renaissance structure, eminently worthy of careful study and, as regards style, comparison with the château itself. Ussé was built by Jacques d'Espinay, Chamberlain to Louis XI and Charles VIII, at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, and its architecture consequently follows the traditions of the Gothic rather than those of the Renaissance style. Only in details of decoration does the spirit of the new manner make its appearance. On the other hand, in the case of the chapel, which was built between 1520 and 1538, in accordance with the testamentary wishes of Jacques d'Espinay, the Renaissance style is dominant. It is not often that one can note so strikingly as this the progress which has been made in a branch of art during so short a period as thirty years.

## CHAPTER XIII

### UP THE CHER: FROM VILLANDRY TO VÉRETZ

EVENING having closed in when we left the banks of the Indre and reached those of the Cher, the start on the last of our journeys along the rivers of Touraine was naturally postponed until the next morning. Before leaving Villandry, however, we paid a brief visit to its stately château, which dates in the main from the end of the sixteenth century. The oldest portion is a square tower of the fourteenth century, facing the park to the right of the entrance; the latest, the terraces, which were added about the middle of the eighteenth century, and from which, on a clear day, a good view can be obtained of the Loire and the châteaux of Luynes and Langeais. The best preserved part is the courtyard. But that is not saying much, for, truth to tell, Villandry is, or was at the time we saw it, in a deplorable

state of preservation. The ancient family which formerly lived there had parted with the property, and the speculators into whose hands it had fallen had allowed it to deteriorate little by little. The grounds had been reduced in size, owing to successive sales, and what remained, some seventy acres and the château, was to be put up for auction on the very day after our visit. As in the case of Azay-le-Rideau, the *concierger* confessed that everybody hoped that a wealthy American would turn up at the opportune moment, "for only the Americans are sufficiently wealthy to restore these old châteaux and keep them up in the ancient style." The interior of the château has no special interest for the sightseer, but its gardens and grounds are delightful. The recollection of a certain avenue of lime trees, one hundred and fifty yards long, will linger in our memories for many and many a year.

Less than two miles along the road from Villandry to Savonnières we came to the famous *caves gouttières* of the last named place. They extend for more than a hundred yards into the hillside, and consist of a number of caverns, through the roofs of which the water, charged with carbonate



THE CHÂTEAU DE VILLANDRY FROM THE PARK



THE CHÂTEAU DE VILLANDRY: THE MOAT



A CORNER OF THE GARDENS AT VILLANDRY

of lime, incessantly filters, forming on all sides the most beautiful deposits of calcareous spar. Bernard Palissy visited them in 1547, and, as he states in one of his works, was delighted with these marvels of Nature. The ancient village of Savonnières to which you come about a third of a mile farther on, is well worth making into a halting place, in order to see the old mill-wheel and the sculptured entrance to a twelfth century church. It was founded by the Romans, who are said to have had a soap manufactory there,—hence its name.

Leaving the Cher at Savonnières, the road does not rejoin the river for a considerable distance, not, in fact, until it reaches St. Avertin, one of the prettiest of the suburbs of Tours. We took advantage of this deviation and went a little out of our way to see the Château de la Carte, near Ballan. This pleasant little manor-house stands on historical ground, and I counsel you to visit it as much on that account as because of its own particular interest. Traces of a Roman road which led from Tours to Poitiers have been found near the château, which was probably intended to defend it, since it stands at the culminating point of the extensive

plateau that separates the valleys of the Loire and the Indre. It was this road which was followed by the Saracens in the eighth century, when they were defeated by Charles Martel. The battle took place (October 10, 732) on the Landes de Charlemagne, which are contiguous with the walls surrounding the grounds of the château. These *landes* are now planted with vines and corn; and it was no unusual thing, some years ago, for the labourers to unearth feudal weapons and bones whilst they were preparing the ground for their masters' crops. Facing them, at the southern extremity of the château's walls, are two ancient towers, provided with loopholes for archers and called by the inhabitants of the district "Charlemagne's Towers." Whether these are as old as they are said to be I have not succeeded in learning either from M. Pierre Duché, the present owner of Carte, or from historical records; but I doubt if they date so far back as the eighth century. Other traces of feudal times were once visible within the grounds, notably a well, called "Le Puits des Sarrasins," which, according to legend, was connected with or was near to a subterranean passage that is





THE CHÂTEAU DE LA CARTE



THE CHÂTEAU DE LA CARTE: THE ENTRANCE



"CHARLEMAGNE'S TOWER" AT THE CHÂTEAU DE LA CARTE

said to have communicated with Tours. This has long since disappeared and must not be confounded with the picturesque old pump and well which exist to the right of the château. But at the entrance to the park there still remains another proof of the antiquity of this country-house and estate: two towers with heavy wooden door, studded with nails and bound with iron, and dating, it is said, from feudal days. On either side I noticed traces of a moat, which was evidently once crossed by a drawbridge. Passing between these towers you see in front of you an extensive lawn and the château, a rather small but homely looking house, which was built, in part, at the end of the fifteenth century. The oldest portion is the square tower, or keep, surmounted by a belfry, at the back of the building. The bell in this belfry weighs nearly half a ton and bears the following inscription in Gothic characters: "Ave Maria, cest bonne chanson, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, MVCXVIII." The arms of Jacques de Beaune, the unfortunate treasurer to Francis I, can still be distinguished upon it, though they were much mutilated at the time of the Revolution. Authority

to build the château was granted to the Baron of Semblançay by Françoise de la Rochefoucauld, Lady of Montbazon, on November 28, 1497. Eighteen months later, Louis XII granted him other privileges, so he set to work to build a château with towers, keep, walls, park, dykes, and fortified gates. The little chapel to the left of the front door also dates from his time. Jacques de Beaune did not, however, long enjoy his new house, for his property was confiscated. Nor did his son, Guillaume de Beaune, to whom part of his father's possessions, including the Château de la Carte, was returned by Francis, have much better fortune. He was similarly accused of embezzling public money, but saved his neck by fleeing, and was banished. Again confiscated, Carte was this time sold, and during the next three hundred years was owned by many famous families. The historian Georges Oudard Feudrix de Brequigny, a member of the French Academy, was the owner in 1760.

There is a tradition that Simon de Brion, who became Pope in 1281 under the title of Martin IV, was born in the château. But this is not known for certain. If he

were, then he must have first seen the light in an earlier manor-house, which was owned by his father, N. de Brion, who is the first known possessor of this ancient estate.

The interior of the Château de la Carte has been completely modernised and therefore contains neither sculptured mantelpieces nor painted ceilings. In lieu of these, however, there are some very fine tapestries, two or three *bahuts* which came from the Château of Azay-le-Rideau, an arm-chair which was used by Balzac on the many occasions he visited at the château, and two interesting firebacks, including one bearing the arms of Gilles Boutaut, or Boutault, who was almoner to Louis XIII, Canon and Archdeacon of Tours, Abbé of St. Remy of Sens, Bishop of Aire in 1626, and Bishop of Evreux in 1649. This distinguished ecclesiastic, who was born at Tours, or in the suburbs, in 1594, died in Paris on March 11, 1661. The chapel contained, during the ownership of the Comtesse de Picquetières, two beautiful stained-glass windows, representing the Nativity and the Adoration, but these were sold some fifteen to twenty years ago before M. Duché bought the property. On the other hand, this gentleman

prevented the dispersion of another equally precious work of art by purchasing, after the Countess' death, a terra-cotta Virgin of the fifteenth or sixteenth century. This charming statuette he has left in its most fitting place, the chapel, whilst a copy of it he has had placed over the doorway. In the chapel is also an ancient fresco which is generally appreciated by antiquarians.

If you have a taste for angling, you can spend many profitable days at St. Avertin. The fishermen of Tours, with which it is connected by an electric tram, hold it in great esteem. But should you have no fondness for sport, an afternoon there will suffice to see everything, since it is rather poor in antiquities. Historically, however, it is an interesting place, especially to English people, who cannot fail to connect its name with that of a famous Englishman, Thomas à Becket. When exiled by Henry VIII, Becket, as we know, came to Tours; and in 1163 he was present at the council of prelates which Pope Alexander III had summoned there for the purpose of deposing the anti-Pope Victor. The archbishop was accompanied by his archdeacon, a Scotchman named Avertin. After the tragedy at Canterbury, Avertin



THE CHÂTEAU DE CANGÉ

is superb. In the distance is Tours, with its dominant feature, the towers of the cathedral, white and shining in the sun ; here and there on the slope of the opposite side of the valley, overlooking the Loire, are white châteaux and country-houses ; and at the foot of the hill on which you are standing winds the Cher, mirroring the blue sky and the fleecy white clouds of a perfect day.

The Château de Cangé, which is viewed better from the back than the front, was built at the end of the fifteenth or at the beginning of the sixteenth century by one of the members of the Coningham family,—probably Pierre de Coningham. The founder of the family was Jean de Coningham, Counsellor and Chamberlain to Louis XI and Charles VIII, and a captain of the Scotch Guard. He came to the district about the year 1489, bought the Cangé estate from Jean de Saint Nectaire and Jean de Montmorin, and died in 1495, bequeathing his property to his son Pierre. The Conighams were lords of Cangé until 1663, in which year the château and grounds passed into other hands. Among the owners in the eighteenth century was Pierre Imbert de Chastres, who became Mayor of Tours, but who is best known to fame as a collector



of manuscripts. His valuable collection of MSS. was sold to the King, and is now in the National Library, in Paris, classified under the name of the *Fonds Cangé*. The present owner is Comte de Pourtales, who, by the bye, is Mayor of St. Avertin, by the inhabitants of which he is much esteemed, owing to the keen interest which he takes in everything concerning the prosperity of their village.

A short halt should be made at Larçay to see the remains of a Gallo-Roman *castellum*. Véretz, a little farther down the Cher, is worth a longer stay. It possesses a modern château built by Baron Paul de Richemont on the site of one which was constructed in 1519 by Jean de la Barre, chamberlain to Charles VIII, and which was almost entirely destroyed during the Revolution; but it is principally interesting on account of its Renaissance church and of the poet Paul Louis Courier, who lived on an estate called "La Chavonnière" not far away from the village. The "Vigneron de Véretz," as he was called, was murdered in the neighbouring forest of Larçay on April 10, 1825; and if you are a person of literary tastes you might pay a visit to the spot where he died. The place

is marked by a monument bearing an inscription. Another monument, with a medallion portrait of this delicate poet, hellenist, and pamphleteer, stands in the village of Véretz itself.

## CHAPTER XIV

### UP THE CHER : AT STAINLESS CHENONCEAUX

UNLIKE so many other castles of Touraine, the Château of Chenonceaux, to which we came after a pleasant fifteen miles' run from Vêretz, calls up only agreeable memories. Blois is stained with blood ; Amboise was a prison ; Loches, Chinon, Luynes, and a dozen more awaken thoughts of treason and the bad side of human nature. But Chenonceaux speaks to us of youth and love and poetry. The most charming figures of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—Diana of Poitiers, Mary Stuart, Gabrielle and Françoise de Mercœur—have occupied it and reflected their pretty faces in the waters of the Cher, on which it is built.

Chenonceaux is unique among the castles of France, for it is the only château which is built above a river and connected with each bank by a bridge. The idea was a

charming one, and could not have been conceived by a man alone. Thomas Bohier is generally credited with having built it, but I strongly suspect that his wife, Catherine Briçonnet, who devoted the treasures which her husband sent her from Italy to the building of this delightful residence, had more to do with the initial idea than some historians imagine. Bohier, who was a native of Auvergne, was Count of Saint Ciergue, général des finances for Normandy, and lieutenant-general of the King's armies. He followed Charles VIII during the Italian campaign, and for a certain time was even Viceroy of Naples. His taste for fine architecture and beautiful things in general is said to have been acquired in Italy, and the date at which he began to build Chenonceaux is supposed to be 1515. The amount of money he expended on his house was enormous, and, judging by the motto which we find so many times inscribed on doors, mantelpieces, and walls—"S'il vient à point, m'en souviendra"—he had little hope of ever seeing it completed. These words were, indeed, prophetic, for he died at the Camp of Vigelli, in Italy, on March 14, 1524, long before the finishing touches had been put to it.



CHENONCEAUX FROM THE FRENCH GARDEN



You enter the château by a carved oak door (sixteenth century) on which are the words, "*Deus spes mea salvs,*" and find yourself in a long vestibule ornamented with ancient pieces of carved furniture. This vestibule divides the château into two parts—one devoted to the needs of a modern house, the other preserved in the style of the sixteenth century. The latter portion, which is the only one presenting real interest, is entered by way of a room transformed into a dining-room. It is said to have been a guardroom originally, but it was more probably a waiting-room for the courtiers. Chenonceaux, although a royal residence, was less a palace than a country-house, and was not sufficiently large to have a guardroom. In addition to some fine specimens of Flemish tapestry, representing the Abduction of Helen, and a painted ceiling bearing Catherine de' Medici's initial, the room contains two beautiful wrought-iron candelabra, one on either side of the fireplace. The adjoining chapel, which is reached by a carved wood door of the sixteenth century to the left, is adorned with the arms of Thomas Bohier and those of his brother, Cardinal Bohier, and is well worth careful

inspection. The date, 1521, on these arms and on the pretty tribune at the bottom shows that the building was completed by Thomas Bohier. The ogee ceiling and the stained-glass windows show that the chapel belongs to the architecture of the transitional period which unites the Gothic era to that of the Renaissance.

The waiting-room preceding this chapel forms a centre from which the large apartments radiate. A door near the mantelpiece leads to Catherine de' Medici's drawing-room; another, parallel to the door into the chapel, opens into the apartments of Louise de Vaudemont, a former owner of Chenonceaux.

Catherine's *salon* is a superbly furnished and decorated room. The mantelpiece is attributed to Germain Pilon. Louise de Vaudemont's apartments consist of three rooms: bedroom, dressing-room, and library. These were formerly hung in black, as a sign of mourning for her husband, Henry III, who, as a matter of fact, was quite unworthy of her grief. The bedroom has been transformed into a *salon*, and furnished in the Francis I style. It is evident from the furnishing of this and other rooms





CHENONCEAUX : THE VESTIBULE



THE DINING-ROOM AT CHENONCEAUX

on the ground-floor that those who have assisted in restoring Chenonceaux have wished to recall the three royal personages who successively owned the château — Francis, Catherine de' Medici, and Louise of Lorraine. As to the library, it is rather a dark little room. Over the door are the words, "Librairie de la royne Loyse." On one of the walls is a framed autograph letter of Henry iv, but the shelves contain few books such as one might expect to find in the library of a queen.

The first-floor of the castle is reached by a fine stone staircase branching off to the right of the vestibule. Let me here say that, up to the time of Francis i, staircases in houses and châteaux were invariably screw-shaped. If, as everything goes to show, the Chenonceaux staircase was built at the same time as those portions of the château which date from the days of Thomas Bohier, it was probably the first straight staircase in France. The vestibule on the first-floor contains some fine full-length portraits, and leads to the bedroom of Diana of Poitiers. The door through which you reach the room is low and narrow, and the interior decoration and furnishing are not so magnifi-

cent as one would have expected the bedroom of a king's favourite to be. But it contains some Flemish tapestries and a rather fine mantelpiece; and I seem to remember having seen there a portrait of the beautiful duchess dressed as Diana the huntress.

Chenonceaux, by the bye, possesses some really good pictures. I saw there a superb canvas by Lesueur, representing three Muses, a work by Vandyke, quite a number of first-rate portraits by the great masters, and, in the gallery on Diana's bridge (a gallery with two storeys), a number of interesting portraits of illustrious people of the sixteenth century.

On retiring to Chenonceaux after the assassination of Henry III, Louise of Lorraine built some cells and a refectory on the upper floor of this gallery for the Sisters of Mercy whom the King of Spain sent to her. These rooms are still to be seen. The theatre in which Jean Jacques Rousseau produced *L'Engagement Téméraire* and *Le Devin du Village*, is at the end of the gallery.

Before leaving the first-floor a visit should be paid to the little terraces overlooking the river. A splendid view of the stream

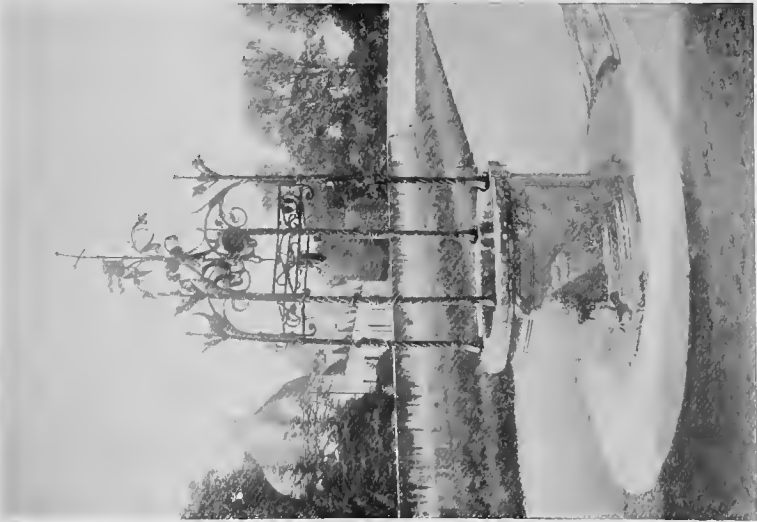
and the surrounding country through which it gracefully winds its way can be obtained from them. Then, by way of contrast, you should descend to the interior of the huge piles which support the main part of the building. Such is the size of these piles that, in addition to the prison and Catherine de' Medici's baths, it was found possible to build there a number of kitchens, a bakery, and a dining-room large enough to hold more than twenty servants.

As in the case of so many French châteaux, the architect who built Chenonceaux is unknown. It is to be presumed, however, that its plans were drawn up and put into execution by Frenchmen, and that it is the work of that school of Tours to which we owe Chambord and a large part of the Château of Blois.

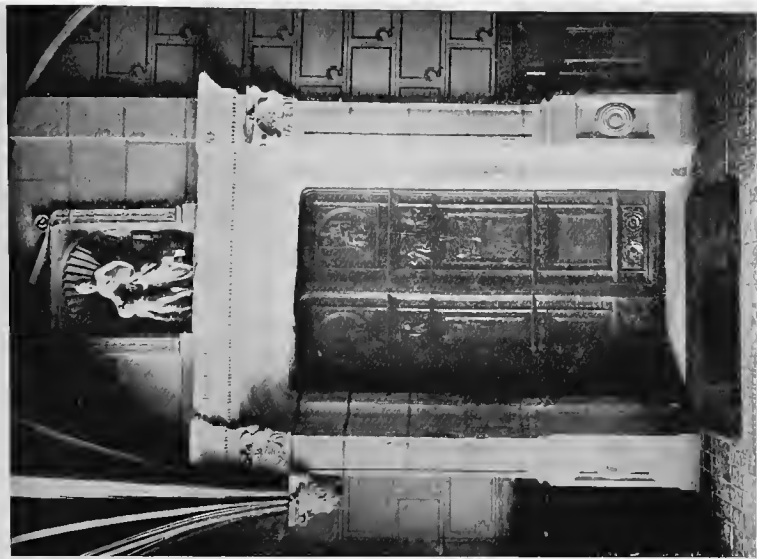
After the death of Thomas Bohier and his wife, the Château of Chenonceaux came into the possession of Francis I. The King continued the work which they had left unfinished, but there is nothing to show that he took either much interest in it or visited it at all frequently. Only two visits are on record: one on August 24, 1546, when he felt the first symptoms of that

mysterious malady which killed him some months later, and the other on April 14, 1545. There was a grand hunting-party on the latter occasion, and among those present were the heir to the throne and Diana of Poitiers. It was probably at this time that Diana conceived the idea of becoming the mistress of this splendid residence. However that may be, the fact remains that Francis had no sooner died than the new King made over the château and its grounds to her.

The next owner was Catherine de' Medici, who, on becoming a widow in 1559, forced Diana to exchange Chenonceaux for Chaumont. The château remained in her possession for thirty years, during which time she made extensive alterations and additions to it. Mary Stuart was a visitor there, and the most elaborate fêtes were given at the end of March 1559, as she and her husband, Francis II, entered the castle. The tenancy of Louise de Vaudemont I have already mentioned. On her death in 1601, she bequeathed the château to her niece, Françoise of Lorraine, Duchesse de Mercœur, the beautiful fiancée of César, Duke of Vendôme. On the death of the



ANCIENT WELL AT CHENONCEAUX



ANCIENT DOORWAY IN THE VESTIBULE AT  
CHENONCEAUX





last of the sons of César de Vendôme, Chenonceaux passed to his widow, Marie Anne of Bourbon, then to the Dowager Princess of Condé, and finally to the Duke of Bourbon, who bought the castle in 1720. He sold it in 1733 to Fermier Général Dupin. Madame Dupin entertained there in magnificent style, among her guests being Fontenelle, Buffon, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Mably, Marivaux, and Rousseau. Rousseau, who, in his youth, had been M. Dupin's secretary and his son's tutor, always spoke kindly of Chenonceaux. It is in his *Confessions*, I believe, that you will find his remark that "Les Français sont en Touraine, non à Paris"; and elsewhere he exclaims :

"Que je me plais sous ces ombrages !  
Que j'aime ces flots argentés !"

Madame Dupin passed the worst days of the Revolution at Chenonceaux. The buildings were spared by the revolutionaries, but they compelled her to burn her securities and a valuable collection of pictures and portraits, collected during three centuries, in front of a tree of Liberty. She died at Chenonceaux in 1799, at the age of ninety-

three, bequeathing the château to her nephew, M. de Villeneuve. It next came into the possession of his only son, Count René de Villeneuve, who began its restoration. George Sand, the Count's cousin-german, was a frequent visitor to Chenonceaux during his ownership. In 1864 the château was sold to the chemist, Pelouze. It is now owned by M. Terry, a wealthy Cuban gentleman, to whose family is due the credit of having undertaken the complete restoration of the château. Up to the present more than two million francs have been expended on the house and gardens, and work was still in progress when we visited his beautiful European home.

Such, in brief, is the history of stainless Chenonceaux. It has had the rare good fortune to be undisturbed by violent events, and let us hope that it will never know the worst side of history.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN THE SARTHE: FROM LE LUDE TO JARZÉ

ALMOST imperceptibly the summer had slipped away. September had come, and with it autumn's messengers. In the early morning, before the sun had had time to warm the air, the cobwebbed furze-bushes at the sides of the lanes of Touraine were covered with myriads of tiny dewdrops, whose sparkle strangely mimicked the hoarfrost of winter. The long rows of poplars, which were rapidly changing their green foliage for one that was yellow and scanty, faded into a misty distance. On low lying meadows near the Loire and the Cher the ground was purple with thousands upon thousands of colchicum blossoms,—the "naked ladies" of our English fields, and so called in rustic language because of the meadow saffron's entire lack of leaves, which do not grow until the spring, its graceful pose, and

its tender tint of mauve suffused with a rosy blush. As to the grapes, these were rapidly reddening on the vines, and in a few weeks' time would be gathered in amidst laughter and song.

On the recommendation of Balzac, who writes with his usual enthusiasm on the subject of the vintage and autumns of Touraine, we were much tempted to linger on in the ancient province. But the call of the city, which we had succeeded in entirely forgetting for more than three months, was, unfortunately, imperative, and our departure thence was now a question merely of days. Besides, the main purpose for which we had come to this part of France had been accomplished; and I can assure you we prided ourselves not a little on the fact that there was not a château or a ruined castle of importance which we had not visited. "I see that you have seen everything," said some one to whom I had enumerated the places at which we had called; "that is, everything in Touraine. But what about the châteaux of the Sarthe? Geographically, they are out of the district you proposed to explore. But, now that you are here and within such a short distance of them, you must not think of neglecting the principal



LE LUDE: FAÇADE FACING THE PARK



THE FRENCH GARDEN AT LE LUDE

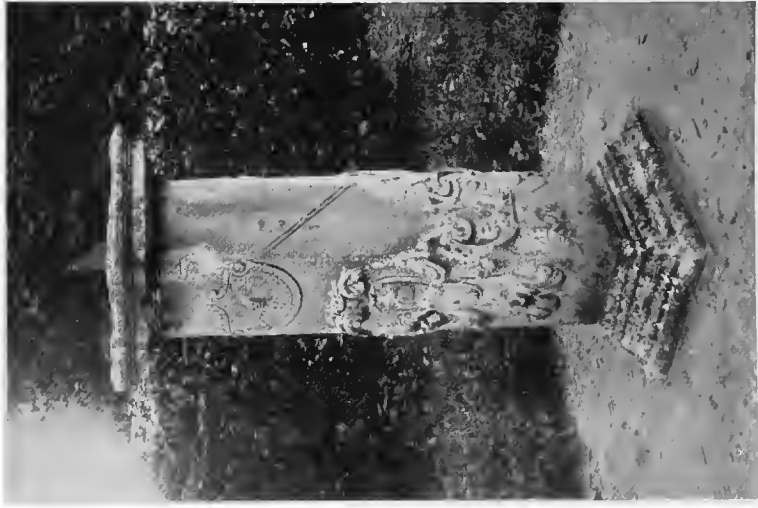
one amongst them—Le Lude. Palustre, you know, says that it would be difficult to find a more elegant example of the architecture of the early days of the Renaissance than this beautiful château.” As this suggested excursion would add, we were told, but two more days at the most to the length of our stay, we decided to undertake it. Tours, therefore, saw us once more. We made a quick run from that town to Château la Vallière, which is noted for its picturesque lake and forest, and thence to Le Lude, an old and prosperous little town on the Loire. The scenery we encountered on the way consisted largely of woodland. In fact, the whole of the Sarthe has the aspect of an extensive forest, the department gaining this appearance owing to the numerous hedges which separate the fields, and the clumps of tall trees which are dotted here and there.

Our adviser was certainly right in recommending us not to miss the Château of Le Lude. Its stateliness, the beauty of its ornamentation on pilasters and dormer-windows, and the charm of its gardens place it on an equal footing with some of the most important of the châteaux of the Loire. The gardens, which are even finer than those at

Chenonceaux, are especially noteworthy. The garden *à l'anglaise* is situated on a raised terrace overlooking the Loir and facing the southern façade of the château, and is embellished along its entire length of two hundred yards with superb marble vases, which I believe are Italian work of the sixteenth century. At the end of the terrace is also a fine marble group, representing Hercules and Antæus, by Mongendre, a Mans sculptor who lived about the end of the reign of Louis XIV. Beneath, and bordering the Loir, is the French garden, set out in that formal manner which accords so well with the lines of the eastern or eighteenth century façade of the château facing the river.

The interior of the château, in spite of the richness of its decoration, proved a disappointment in comparison with what we had seen outside. The four huge machicolated towers give the idea that the building is a very roomy one, but on entering you find that this is not so. With the exception of the large and small drawing-rooms, and the Salle des Fêtes, the rooms are small and, withal, astonishingly dark. The electric light had to be turned on even in the fairly large Salle des Fêtes in order to be able to see the sculptured mantel-





AN ANCIENT SUNDIAL IN THE GROUNDS OF  
LE LUDE



ONE OF THE VASES IN THE ENGLISH GARDEN  
AT LE LUDE



THE CHÂTEAU DES CARMES AT LA FLÈCHE

piece to advantage ! Yet the sun outside was shining magnificently from a cloudless sky. This sombreness is caused, of course, by the immense thickness of the walls and the equally unavoidable narrowness of the windows, and is one of the disadvantages, from the modern point of view, of most of these ancient châteaux. Otherwise, the apartments are above criticism. On all sides in the dining-room, library, and drawing-rooms are choice furniture, pictures, tapestries, and other works of art ; a little oratory in one of the towers is decorated with remarkable mural paintings by artists of the school of Rosso and Primatice ; the recently completed carved stone staircase is a fine example of modern work ; and the bedrooms, in one of which Henry iv slept during his visit to Le Lude in 1598, as shown by a framed letter preserved there, are interesting either for their contents or their historical associations.

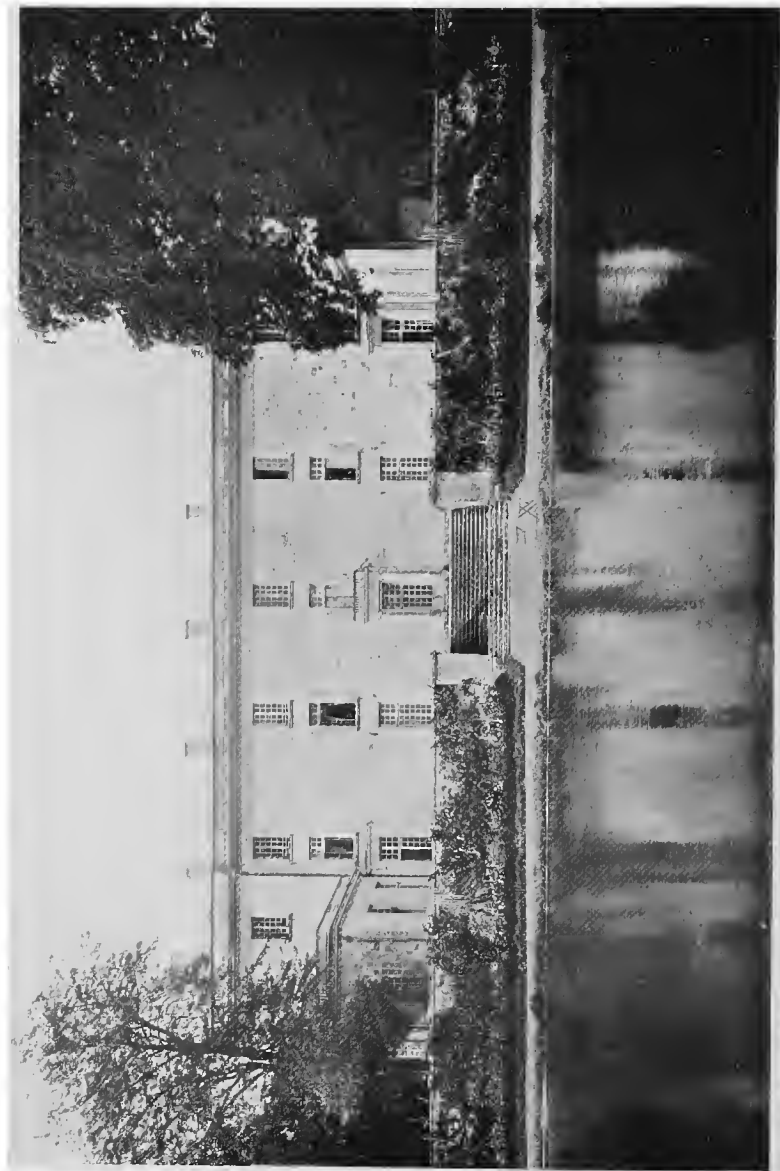
The Château of Le Lude, which forms a large quadrilateral, surrounding a rather diminutive courtyard, was built by members of the Daillon family. Jacques de Daillon began to build it on the site of a feudal castle about the year 1520 ; the work was continued by his widow, on behalf of their son Jean,

and it was completed by Guy de Daillon, the son of Jean. Later owners made additions or alterations. Thus, Thimoléon de Daillon, whose sundial, bearing the arms of his family and those of his wife, with their initials and the date 1649, stands in the garden facing the eighteenth century façade, directed his attention principally to the gardens; whilst the Marquis de la Vieuville, who restored the mansion at a cost of over £11,000, pulled down the western wing which connected the two towers nearest the town, replaced it by the present buildings and three-arched portico, and built the eastern façade. The restoration of Le Lude was continued in 1853 by the present owner, the Marquis de Talhouët, and has only recently been completed. The northern façade, with its equestrian statue of Jacques de Daillon, and the monumental entrance to the grounds from the town form part of the work he has had carried out.

It was inevitable that, having come so far as Le Lude, we should proceed a little farther towards Jarzé, which held forth the prospect of an interesting château, since we were informed it had been built by Jean Bourré, the builder of Langeais. On our way there we



THE CHÂTEAU DE BAUGÉ



THE CHÂTEAU DE JARZÉ

came first to La Flèche and then to Baugé, both famous places. The former is celebrated for its military school, which, founded by Napoleon in 1808, in ecclesiastical buildings dating from about the middle of the seventeenth century, has produced many of France's finest soldiers. But this Prytanée interested us less than the pretty Château des Carmes, a former convent near the bridge that crosses the Loir. There is also a château at Baugé, — a picturesque, weather-beaten building of the fifteenth century which is attributed to King René, who, according to legend, was very fond of this town and district. The former residence of the good King of Naples (he was surnamed "Le Bon" on account of his paternal character, his pacific government, his constant serenity under ill fortune, and his love for art and literature) is now the Mairie and Gendarmery. Its best preserved portions are the sculptured doorway to the tower facing the Place du Château and the winding staircase within, a staircase surmounted by a fan-vaulting on which are armorial bearings supposed to be those of King René. Whilst on the road from Baugé to Jarzé you get a view, on the left, of the towers of the Château de Landifer,

which should be visited if you wish to be able to say that you have explored the Sarthe thoroughly. Not professing to have set out to do that, we did not find the time to see this partly Renaissance, partly modern castle.

Jarzé is a plain, a very plain country-house situated on an eminence, whence an extensive view can be obtained of much of the surrounding country, even as far as Angers, twenty-seven miles away, when the weather is good. Having Langeais in our mind's eye, we expected to find something a good deal more castle-like than this. But it appeared we had paid our visit a little more than one hundred and ten years too late, for nearly the whole of the castle built by Jean Bourré in 1500 was burnt down in 1794. Two paintings over the doors in the Petit Salon of its comparatively modern successor show its outward appearance. The still remaining portions of the old castle consist of a small guardroom and a little oratory with vaulted ceiling on which are paintings of cupids. The other rooms are frankly modern. Yet they have one peculiarity which is certainly worthy of being mentioned, *i.e.* that what beauties they may possess



lie hidden beneath their lath and plaster ceilings. Beneath these, in all probability, are others with painted beams. One of the sons of the owner, M. Cloquemin, took us into a bedroom where the ceiling had been pierced, and through the hole, sure enough, we could see the original plafond, with its ornamentation almost as fresh as the day it was painted. The restoration of Jarzé might, therefore, be worth undertaking.

With the Château of Jarzé we brought our sight-seeing to an end. Even our motor-car seemed to realise that we had visited enough châteaux, for, on returning to La Flèche, there occurred the only serious breakdown we had had during the three months we spent in central France. The next day, however, we were once more on the road, and on reaching Tours we took the train for Paris. The beautiful Loire, seen now and then from our carriage window, flashed in the sunlight and set up recollections of the happy days we had spent upon its banks. Royal Amboise came into sight and faded away; the stout towers of Chaumont rose once more from the trees on its wooded ridge and likewise disappeared; and the northern wing of the Castle of Blois towered for an instant above the gray little

town which had been our starting-place. That last glimpse of the work of the Renaissance made us perceive more clearly than anything else had done that our summer sojourn was over.

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